

THE HOMELAND SECURITY *NEWS CLIPS*

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TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF

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LEADING DHS NEWS

DHS Secretary Agrees Russia Meddled In Election, But Dodges Whether It Helped Trump

By Connor O'Brien
[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said Thursday that Russia undoubtedly interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, but declined to say directly that those efforts were aimed at helping elect Donald Trump.

"Russia was absolutely attempting to interfere in our election systems," Nielsen said during an interview at the Aspen Security Forum. She endorsed the U.S. intelligence community assessment of Russian meddling "full stop," she said later.

But pressed by moderator Peter Alexander of NBC News, Nielsen downplayed that the effort was aimed to benefit Trump, calling it "an effort to attack certain political parties ... more than others" and saying Russia's primary purpose is to "sow discord" in the U.S.

"I haven't seen any evidence that the attempts to interfere in our election infrastructure was to favor a particular political party," Nielsen said. "I think what we've seen on the foreign influence side is they were attempting to intervene and cause chaos on both sides, right, whether it was in Charlottesville where we saw them on both sides, whether it's in Syria, both sides."

"So, no, I would not necessarily say that was the purpose," she said. "I think the overall purpose is to sow discord and get us all to fight against each other rather than understand who the enemy is."

Pressed further during an audience question-and-answer session, Nielsen again underscored her support for the election interference assessment, but again ducked whether Russia's aim was to help Trump and hurt his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton.

"I agree with intel community's assessment. Full stop," Nielsen said, though she still did not say whether Russia aimed to help Trump and disadvantage Clinton.

Nielsen also predicted Russia will likely attempt to interfere in upcoming elections, adding that DHS was working to help prepare states for it.

"I don't think there's any question in the intel community or at DHS that Russians attempted to infiltrate and interfere with our electoral system," Nielsen said. "They have the capability. They have the intent."

"What we're doing at DHS is to work with states to prepare on that election infrastructure piece. That's the piece we have lead on," she said. "But I don't think there's any doubt that they did it, and I think we should

all be prepared, given that capability and will, that they'll do it again."

The myriad agencies in the U.S. intelligence community unanimously concluded that Russia had interfered in the U.S. elections to aid Trump and damage Clinton. And Trump appears to have finally endorsed those findings as well, after considerable back-and-forths.

On Wednesday, though, he appeared to undercut the intelligence community's conclusions and a recent statement by Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, when he said the Russian government is no longer trying to interfere in the U.S. political process. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders later attempted to walk back the statement, saying that Trump simply said "no" to answering additional questions from reporters and that he hadn't said Russia wasn't attempting to undermine U.S. elections.

On Wednesday in Aspen, FBI Director Chris Wray said he stands by the intelligence community's assessment and emphasized Russia is still working to "sow divisiveness" in the U.S.

U.S. Must Prepare For More Russian Meddling: Nielsen

By Reuters Staff
[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Ambiguous Comments From Homeland Chief On Election Meddling

By Deb Riechmann
[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen says she has not seen evidence that the Russians meddled in the 2016 election to help elect Trump, countering the U.S. intelligence agencies assessment on the issue.

Intelligence agencies concluded in early 2017 that President Vladimir Putin ordered "an influence campaign" aimed at helping the Trump campaign and harming his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton.

Nielsen said: "I haven't seen any evidence that the attempts to interfere in our election infrastructure was to favor a particular party."

And yet Nielsen still says she stands behind the intelligence agencies' assessment that Russia meddled in the election. She added that Russia's influence operations were aimed at causing chaos on both sides.

Nielsen spoke Thursday at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.

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It Would Be “Foolish” To Think Russia Isn’t Still Targeting U.S., DHS Secretary Says

By Emily Tillett

[CBS News](#), July 19, 2018

Amid questions about where President Trump stands on Russian efforts to target the U.S. in the 2016 election and beyond, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen says Russia was “absolutely” attempting to interfere in the U.S. election systems in 2016 and that it would be “foolish” to think they aren’t trying to do so again in 2018.

“Russia was absolutely attempting to interfere in our election systems,” Nielsen said at an Aspen Security forum conversation with NBC News’ Peter Alexander in Colorado. She added, when asked if the U.S. is still a target, “I think we’d be foolish to think they’re not. They have capability, they have the will, we’ve got to be prepared.”

Nielsen was pressed on the president’s conflicting statements from his summit with Putin in Helsinki where he suggested that both the U.S. and Russia were to blame for election tampering in 2016 and did not hold Putin accountable. On Wednesday, Mr. Trump CBS News’ Jeff Glor that he “would” hold Putin responsible for interference and said that he had warned Putin not to meddle.

Nielsen told Alexander that she doesn’t think “there’s any question in the intelligence community or DHS that Russians attempted to infiltrate and interfere with our electoral systems.” She said they have the “capability” and the “intent,” adding, “I don’t think there’s any doubt that they did it, and I think we should all be prepared that given that capability, they’ll do it again.”

On the question of whether Putin himself directed the call to interfere in the U.S. election, Nielsen said that the 2016 attack was carried out by “Russian government actors” and that the public “can all draw conclusions what that means.” But she also said that despite the intelligence communities findings, she hadn’t seen any evidence that the attempts to interfere in the country’s election infrastructure “was to favor a particular party.”

She added, “No, I would not necessarily say that was the purpose, I think the overall purpose was to sow discord and to get us all to fight against each other rather than understand who the enemy is.”

Nielsen made similar comments back in May, telling reporters after a classified election security briefing on Capitol Hill that she “hasn’t seen” a

conclusion by the intelligence community that Russia’s intent in meddling in the 2016 election was to help Mr. Trump win the presidency and to hurt Hillary Clinton.

But the assessment released by the director of National Intelligence in January 2017 read, “We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election. Russia’s goals were to undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. We further assess Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump,” the report said.

It continued, “We also assess Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump’s election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him.”

And Putin himself noted at Monday’s joint press conference that he did in fact favor Mr. Trump to win the election over Clinton. “Yes, I did, yes, I did, because he talked about bringing U.S.-Russia relations back to normal,” Putin told reporters when asked if he wanted Mr. Trump to win the presidency.

Nielsen added on Thursday, “It was in an effort to attack certain political parties that we know about more than others and so I think we’ll continue to look and see what that means and be prepared for the next time.”

Asked for her assessment of the president’s performance in Helsinki, Nielsen said it’s “still too early to tell” if Mr. Trump would walk away with a win from his summit.

Kirstjen Nielsen Won’t Say Whether Russian Meddling Favored Trump

[NBC News](#), July 19, 2018

ASPEN, Colo. — Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen on Thursday declined to explicitly say whether Russia’s interference in the 2016 election favored Donald Trump and would not commit to reuniting nearly 2,500 migrant children with their parents by the court-ordered deadline.

“I haven’t seen any evidence that the attempts to interfere in our election infrastructure was to favor a particular political party,” Nielsen told NBC News National Correspondent Peter Alexander at the Aspen Security Forum, in an interview that focused heavily on Russian meddling and the controversy of separating migrant children from their parents.

When pressed to say explicitly whether Russia favored Trump and Republicans in its influence campaign and in its hacking of Democratic Party emails,

Nielsen only said that she agreed with the assessment of the intelligence community.

The assessment found that Russian efforts favored Trump and the Republican Party, but Nielsen would not definitively comment on that piece of the report.

"Russia was absolutely attempting to interfere in our election systems," said Nielsen.

Trump cast doubt on the assessment of the intelligence community earlier this week, which found that Russia interfered in the election and favored his campaign. While he has walked back his comment at the Helsinki summit that Russia likely didn't interfere with the 2016 election, on Tuesday he said others besides Russia might have interfered, and on Wednesday that he didn't think Russia was still trying to interfere with U.S. elections.

Nielsen, however, said "it would be foolish" to think Russia is not still interfering with the U.S. electoral system.

"They have the capability, they have the will. We've got to be prepared," she said.

Asked whether countries other than Russia had participated in the attack on the 2016 U.S. election, Nielsen said, "We did not see other nation states involved in the election system meddling."

Nielsen's comments follow FBI Director Chris Wray's assertion Tuesday night that "Russia attempted to interfere with the last election and that it continues to engage in malign influence operations to this day."

Alexander asked Nielsen if the administration would meet the July 26 deadline for reuniting 2,500 parents with their children.

"We will do our best but we will not cut corners. Again this is about the protection of the child," Nielsen said.

Lawyers for the ACLU have argued that U.S. Health and Human Services and DHS should not be using the same vetting processes to reunite children with biological parents as they would to place them with nonrelated sponsors like foster parents. Some children under 5 were not reunited with their parents because a parent had a citation for a DUI; others have not been reunited because their parents were deported.

DHS will work to find deported parents, but Nielsen made no commitment to how speedily children would be reunified with parents who were ordered to leave the country.

Nielsen also said that border security has weakened as a result of the reversal of Trump's "zero tolerance" policy that separated parents from children.

"We have no border control now," Nielsen said, commenting on the current policy that does not allow for

the criminal prosecution of parents crossing the border illegally with their children.

Nielsen also declined to say whether the systematic separation of migrant children from their parents was a form of child abuse and placed the blame for the policy on Congress's failure to pass immigration reform. She also declined to say whether Attorney General Jeff Sessions's April announcement of the zero tolerance policy was a surprise to her.

The Trump administration has one more week to reunite nearly 2,500 migrant children with their parents in order to comply with a court order. Nielsen said she would not cut corners, like forgoing DNA tests and criminal background checks of those claiming to be parents, in order to meet the deadline.

Nielsen said the trip for children to the U.S. from Central America is so dangerous and rape is so common that all girls over age 10 are given pregnancy tests upon crossing the border.

Nielsen said she has a very professional relationship with Trump and that he listens to her opinions. Trump reportedly berated Nielsen at a White House meeting earlier this year and some reports suggested she might resign.

"When I've heard those suggestions, they are in situations where I would never consider resigning," Nielsen said. "As long as I can help America, I will continue to do my job."

Nearly a year has passed since white nationalists convened a violent protest in Charlottesville, Virginia, where one counterprotester was killed. Trump was criticized after the event for saying there were good people on both sides.

Nielsen condemned violence in all forms Thursday, but did not speak out specifically against white nationalism.

Homeland Security Chief: Trump Directed Me To Secure Future Elections

By Christopher Smith

[Daily Caller](#), July 19, 2018

U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen said in a recent interview that she has been directed by President Donald Trump to secure and protect future elections from meddling.

Nielsen warned the audience, as well as the American people, that Russia is not yet done meddling in elections. "It's July, so we still have August, we still have September, we still have October, we have November. I think we should be absolutely prepared to assume that they will try to interfere in all 50 states," she said.

"So what are we doing about that right now," moderator Peter Alexander of NBC News asked. "What can the DHS do actively to help stop that? And is the president — has he met with you personally, given you the directive to make sure that the U.S. is preparing itself for an attack on the midterms from Russia, like the last one," Alexander asked. "Yes, we have had meetings with the president, we have another one coming up ... at a very high level we're information sharing, we're giving them intel they need, technical systems, and then we're helping them be prepared for instant response," Nielsen responded. "I'm happy to report it was on Saturday that all 50 states are now working with us, in some cases they're using our services extensively, in other cases they're growing capability organically, and in some cases they're hiring outside expertise."

The secretary's comments come amid an onslaught of criticism from both parties as to whether the president has been taking the issue of Russian election meddling seriously enough, and whether he has any intentions of stopping it in the future.

Trump has been praised at times for the tough actions he has taken with respect to Russia, but has been severely and almost universally criticized for his rhetoric. (RELATED: CNN'S POPPY HARLOW SAYS TRUMP HAS BEEN TOUGHER ON RUSSIA THAN OBAMA)

DHS Chief Says 'Too Soon' To Tell If Trump-Putin Relationship Will Have Any Real Impact

By Mike Levine

[ABC News](#), July 19, 2018

The nation's top Homeland Security official, charged with helping to stop foreign hackers from breaking into U.S. systems, says it's still not clear whether President Donald Trump's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier this week will produce any significant results, but Trump "continues to work on the relationship."

"I think it's too early to tell, 'Was it good?'" Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said of Trump's meeting with Putin.

Speaking Thursday at the annual Aspen Security Forum, Nielsen said Trump's efforts to connect with Putin and establish "productive conversation" are "very important," noting that Trump is "interested in continuing the engagement."

"He's continuing to think about strategies," trying to determine "what is most important on the list to work with Vladimir Putin," who Nielsen said has "a particular goal"

to become a "strong power" and "counter American power."

Nevertheless, in the wake of several controversial comments and clarifications by Trump, Nielsen became the latest senior U.S. official to publicly state that Russia definitely was behind the massive foreign campaign to meddle in the 2016 presidential campaign.

"I don't think there's any question in the intelligence community or at DHS that Russians attempted to infiltrate and interfere with our electoral system," Nielsen said. "I don't think there's any doubt they did it."

On Monday, while standing next to Putin in Helsinki, Trump questioned the unanimous conclusions of his own intelligence agencies and suggested Russia was not responsible for the 2016 hack of the Democratic National Committee, a massive effort to spread "fake news" on social media, or other steps to interfere in American democracy.

After a political uproar, Trump posted a message on Twitter the next day insisting: "I accept our intelligence community's conclusion that Russia's meddling in the 2016 election took place. Could be other people also."

On Tuesday, the president said: "I accept our intelligence community's conclusion that meddling took place," as he read from remarks. He added that it "could be other people also. There's a lot of people out there."

In Aspen, Colorado, on Thursday, Nielsen said Russia was solely responsible.

"We did not see other nation states involved in the election system meddling," She said. "It was Russia."

And with only months way until midterm elections across the United States, Nielsen warned that Americans would "be foolish" to think Russia won't launch another assault on U.S. democracy.

"I think we should all be prepared, given [their] capability and will, that they'll do it again," she said. "We should be absolutely prepared to assume that they will try to interfere in all 50 states."

A top DHS official described the current threat from Russia as a "nuanced" one.

While DHS "right now" has not seen "the targeting of the state and local systems that we saw in 2016," Russia is still engaged in trying to influence Americans and sow discord through social media and other means, Assistant Secretary Jeanette Manfra said Thursday.

DHS Secretary Nielsen Contradicts Intelligence Community's Findings That Russia Preferred Trump

By Summer Meza

[The Week](#), July 19, 2018

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen on Thursday claimed that she hadn't "seen any evidence" that Russian interference in the 2016 election was intended to help President Trump win, despite the U.S. intelligence community concluding that Russia's efforts favored Trump.

Speaking at the Aspen Security Forum, Nielsen said, "I don't think there's any question that Russians attempted to infiltrate and interfere with our electoral system," adding that "we should all be prepared that they'll do it again." However, when NBC News' Peter Alexander gave her the chance to clarify her thoughts on Russia's preferred outcome, she contradicted intelligence officials' findings by saying Russia merely sought to create "chaos."

"I haven't seen any evidence that the attempts to interfere in our election infrastructure was to favor a particular political party," she said. She expanded on that theory to say that Russia simply wanted to "cause chaos on both sides. Whether it was in Charlottesville, where we saw them on both sides, whether it's in Syria — both sides. So, no, I would not necessarily say that was the purpose." Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday said he wanted Trump to win the election.

Later, Nielsen backtracked and said "I do not disagree" with the intelligence community's assessment. It seems the rest of Nielsen's appearance at Aspen didn't go very smoothly, either, as her speech elicited laughs when she said that Trump "loves diverse opinions" and "craves different points of view." Watch her denial of Russia's favoring of Trump below, via Bloomberg. Summer Meza

Update 4:50 p.m.: Nielsen later issued a tweet in which she said "I agree with the intel community assessment. Full stop. Any attack on our democracy, which is what that was, whether it's successful or unsuccessful, is unacceptable." She said DHS needs to help states "prepare & prevent any Russian interference in our election systems."

DHS Head Kirstjen Nielsen Agrees With Intelligence Community's Russia Assessment 'Full Stop'

By Diana Stancy Correll

[Washington Examiner](#), July 19, 2018

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said that she concurs with a January 2017 report from members of the U.S. intelligence community that found Russian agents were responsible for interfering in the election.

In an interview with CNN's Jim Sciutto at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado Thursday, Nielsen

said she agrees with the report "full stop." She did not explicitly say, however, that Russia interfered to help President Trump, as the intelligence community's assessment surmised.

Nielsen's response to Sciutto was the most assertive one she gave after repeatedly being asked about the topic throughout the day. Earlier, in a separate interview, Nielsen claimed that she had not seen anything to suggest that Russian interference in the 2016 election sought to benefit Trump.

"I haven't seen any evidence that the attempts to interfere in our election infrastructure was to favor a particular political party," Nielsen told NBC News' Peter Alexander. "I think the overall purpose was to sow discord."

The U.S. intelligence community report found that the Russian interference operation gave preference to Trump over Democratic presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton.

"We further assess [Russian President Vladimir] Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump ... We also assess Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump's election changes when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him," the report found.

When pressed about the findings of the U.S. intelligence report, Nielsen claimed the interference was designed to "attack certain political parties."

"It was in an effort to attack certain political parties that we know about — right — more than others," Nielsen said in response. "I think we'll continue to look and see what that means and be prepared for the next time."

Nielsen's comments come after Trump told reporters Monday during a joint press conference in Helsinki alongside Putin that he had no reason not to believe the Russian leader's assurances to him that the Kremlin was not to blame for interference in the election.

Trump later admitted that he misspoke when he said he didn't "see any reason why" Russia would have meddled in the 2016 election, and said he believes the U.S. intelligence community assessment that found Russian agents did interfere in the electoral process. Trump also said during a CBS News interview that he holds Putin "responsible" for interference in the U.S. electoral process.

DHS Sec. Kirstjen Nielsen Won't Say Putin Wanted Trump To Win

By Betsy Woodruff

[Daily Beast](#), July 19, 2018

ASPEN, COLORADO—Homeland Security Sec. Kirstjen Nielsen on Thursday declined to say the Russians wanted President Donald Trump to win the election—departing both from the assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community and the words of Russian President Vladimir Putin himself.

Nielsen made the comments at the Aspen National Security Forum in a question-and-answer session with NBC News' Peter Alexander. Alexander first asked Nielsen about Russian meddling, and she said there was no question that the Kremlin interfered in the 2016 election. But when the NBC reporter pushed Nielsen on the motives behind that effort, she appeared to depart from the Intelligence Community's view.

"I haven't seen any evidence that the attempt to interfere in our election infrastructure was to favor a particular political party," she said. "I think what we've seen on the foreign influence side is they were attempting to intervene and cause chaos on both sides, whether it's in Charlottesville, where we saw them on both sides, whether it's in Syria, both sides. So I would not necessarily say that was the purpose."

Later in the event, however, when pressed by reporters in the audience, Nielsen said she agreed with the Intelligence Community assessment. But she would not specifically say she agreed with it on the question of Putin's motives.

In a joint press conference with Trump on July 16, Putin said he wanted Trump to win.

"Yes, I did," the Russian leader asserted. "Yes, I did. Because he talked about bringing the U.S.-Russia relationship back to normal."

The U.S. Intelligence Community was unequivocal in January 2017 about the motives behind Russia's election meddling.

"We further assess Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump," their report read. "We have high confidence in these judgments. We also assess Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump's election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him. All three agencies agree with this judgment."

The Senate intelligence committee, which oversees the Intelligence Community, released a report in May of 2018 supporting the assessment.

"The Russian effort was extensive, sophisticated, and ordered by President Putin himself for the purpose of helping Donald Trump and hurting Hillary Clinton," the committee found.

Every US State Must Prepare For Russian Election Interference In Midterms, Says Homeland Security Chief Kirstjen Nielsen

By Emily Shugerman

[Independent \(UK\)](#), July 19, 2018

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen has said every US state needs to prepare for attempts by Russia to interfere in November's midterm elections.

Ms Nielsen said there was no question Moscow meddled in the 2016 presidential election. But she would not go so far as to agree with the US intelligence community's assertion that Russia interfered in Donald Trump's favour.

"I haven't seen any evidence that the attempts to interfere in our election infrastructure was to favour a particular political party," she said in an interview with NBC's Peter Alexander.

Trump says Russia no longer targeting US

The interview on Thursday followed a highly controversial press conference between Mr Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, in which Mr Trump appeared to side with the foreign leader over his own intelligence agencies on allegations of election interference. Mr Trump reversed his comments a day later, but they had already sparked outcry and action in Congress.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Thursday he had asked two committees to hold hearings on possible Russian sanctions, in an effort to prevent meddling in the coming midterms. Mr McConnell stated unequivocally that it was clear Mr Putin had "ordered an influence campaign" in 2016. Trump: I would 'hold Putin responsible' for election meddling

US intelligence officials have warned that Russia will likely attempt to sway the November midterms, through both influence campaigns and cyber attacks on US voting systems.

National Intelligence Director Dan Coats said last week that Russia efforts were "persistent, they're pervasive and they are meant to undermine America's democracy on a daily basis".

"The warning signs are there," he added. "The system is blinking. And it is why I believe we are at a critical point."

Congress recently announced \$380m in funding to improve states' election security. According to a recent survey by Politico, however, few states plan to update their voting infrastructure before November. Only 13 states said they would use the money to buy new voting machines, and at least 22 said they had no plans to replace their machines before the election at all.

In an interview on Wednesday with CBS, Mr Trump for the first time said he held Mr Putin personally responsible for the 2016 interference and said he had told him it must stop.

"I let him know we can't have this. We're not going to have it and that's the way it's going to be," he said.

Reuters contributed to this report.

Homeland Security Head Kirstjen Nielsen Tells Aspen Crowd 'we Have To Fix' Immigration System

By Carolyn Sackariason

[Aspen \(CO\) Times](#), July 19, 2018

Saying repeatedly that this country's immigration system and the laws that dictate separating children from their parents at the border are fundamentally flawed, the head of the Department of Homeland Security said Thursday in Aspen that she will do her best to meet a court-set deadline to reunite families.

"We will do our best, but we will not cut corners," said Kirstjen Nielsen, secretary of Homeland Security. "This is about the protection of the child."

Nielsen spoke for an hour with NBC News' Peter Alexander in the Doerr Hosier Center as part of the Aspen Security Forum.

July 26 is the deadline set by a federal judge for the government to reunite an estimated 2,500 children with their parents who illegally crossed the U.S. border.

Most of those families were fleeing violence in countries including Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala and were separated at the U.S.-Mexico border as part of the Trump administration's zero-tolerance policy on immigration.

"We have 10,000 unaccompanied children right now in DHS care," Nielsen said. "So, these parents sent them on this journey without any parental supervision with smugglers, traffickers, with other adults. They have no advocates. They are here alone. DHS is taking care of them. So we have to fix the system."

Nielsen said the problem with the immigration system is that the ideals and empirical truths that Americans have cannot be true at the same time.

"Kids should be with their parents, countries should be able to protect borders, governments should be able to protect communities," she said, adding that it is the job of Congress to fix the system with new laws.

Alexander asked Nielsen that when she visits the detention centers in Texas and other facilities at the border, doesn't she question as a human being what the country is doing to these children?

Nielsen said, in so many words, that her hands are tied.

"I say, 'this is crazy,'" she said, later adding, "Look, we have a constitutional imbalance right now, just to be clear ...

"We have Congress telling the executive branch, 'don't enforce the laws we pass. We don't have courage to fix them.' We have the judicial branch, who is neither operational nor a legislative body saying, 'this is how we want you to enforce the law' in a very tactical way, thereby making a law. How it should work is Congress should make the laws, the law enforcement bodies should enforce the laws and the judicial branch should interpret them.

"We have to make sure that the system allows to keep children and families together," Nielsen continued. "Right now under the law in court cases we cannot do that."

Nielsen has met with leaders of Guatemala and Mexico to discuss strategy to stabilize their countries so their citizens aren't forced to flee.

But more importantly, she is working with international communities to provide asylum at various points in immigrants' long journey to the United States.

"This journey, I mean smugglers are not humanitarians," Nielsen said, noting that DHS gives pregnancy tests to every girl older than 10 years old who comes across the border illegally. "I can guarantee this journey is terrible. It's in everyone's interest to get the smugglers out of the way."

She said that since President Trump signed an executive order last month, the DHS is no longer separating families at illegal ports of entry — unless the agency cannot guarantee that a parent or adult is the child's legal guardian; if the child is in clear danger; or if the accompanying adult has to go to a criminal detention center.

Twenty percent of the adults who have accompanied children younger than 5 years old at the border were determined not be fit to be reunited — the vast majority were smugglers or traffickers, kidnappers, murderers, child abusers and exploiters, Nielsen said.

"These are adults in American society we would never place with American children," she said. "We owe the same protections to children from anywhere."

On the topic of Russian interference in the 2016 election, which President Trump suggested earlier this week that it could be "other people also," Nielsen said her agency believes it's singularly the Russian government that played a role.

"I don't think there is any question in the intel community or at DHS that Russians attempted to infiltrate and interfere with our electoral system. They have the capability. They have the intent," she said. "I don't think there is any doubt that they did it and we

should all be prepared, given that capability and will, that they'll do it again."

Nielsen stopped short of saying the meddling was under the direction of Russian President Vladimir Putin to help Trump's campaign.

"It's government actors, we can draw our own conclusions what that means," she said, adding that the Russian interference wasn't targeted toward one specific political party.

"Their intent is to absolutely interfere in our democracy."

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DHS Secretary Hedges On July 26 Deadline To Reunite Migrant Families

By Connor O'Brien

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

ASPEN, Colo. — Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen hedged Thursday on whether the federal government would meet the court-ordered deadline in a week to reunify migrant families who were separated at the U.S.-Mexican border.

"We will do our best, but we will not cut corners," Nielsen said at the Aspen Security Forum.

The government faces the July 26 deadline to reunify approximately 2,500 children ages 5 to 17 with their parents.

But Nielsen, who has defended family separation and instead blamed Congress for not acting to prevent it, argued efforts to reunify families are "about the protection of the child."

"A good portion of these adults showing up are not their family," she said.

The Trump administration has faced intense criticism for its so-called zero tolerance policy on illegal immigration, which led to the separation of thousands of migrant families who crossed the border illegally.

In response, President Donald Trump signed an executive order in June to stop it.

U.S. Aims To Meet Deadline On Reuniting Migrants, Government Says

By Reuters Staff

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Kirstjen Nielsen Blames Both Sides For Deadly Charlottesville Violence, Claims Russia Didn't Try To Help Trump

By Nicole Goodkind

[Newsweek](#), July 19, 2018

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said Thursday that Russian interference did not play a role in President Donald Trump's 2016 election win.

"I haven't seen any evidence that the attempts to interfere in our election on infrastructure was to favor one political party," she told a crowd of mostly Republicans at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado. "I think what we've seen on the foreign influence side is they were attempting to intervene and cause chaos on both sides."

The comment came just three days after Russian president Vladimir Putin confirmed that he wanted Trump to win the 2016 presidential election over his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton. During a joint press conference with Trump in Helsinki, a reporter asked if Putin supported Trump during the election, "yes I did," responded Putin. "Yes I did, because he talked about bringing the U.S.-Russia relationship back to normal."

In May 2018, the Senate Intelligence Committee backed previous reports issued by the National Intelligence Council and special counsel Robert Muller, reaffirming that Russia interfered in the 2016 election to benefit Trump. "The Russian effort was extensive, sophisticated, and ordered by President Putin himself for the purpose of helping Donald Trump and hurting Hillary Clinton," they wrote.

President Trump has sent mixed messages about his official stance on Russian election intervention. In Helsinki on Monday, Trump suggested to reporters that he believed Putin's denial of interference. The following day he claimed he simply misspoke, but on Wednesday appeared to tell reporters that he did not believe Russia was still targeting the U.S. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders then denied Trump was responding to a question when he said "no." Later that day, he told CBS News that he did, in fact, blame Putin for election meddling "because he's in charge of the country."

After her talk in Aspen, Nielsen also walked back her comments, telling CNN's Jim Sciutto that she supported the intelligence community's report, "full stop."

But that wasn't Nielsen's only comment during the talk that raised eyebrows.

Nielsen discussed Trump's controversial comments that there were "fine people on both sides" of the white supremacist riots in Charlottesville, Virginia, last summer. Nielsen explained that "it's not that one side was right and one side was wrong." Instead, she said, "anybody that is advocating violence, we need to work to mitigate."

Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, responded to Nielsen's comments on Twitter. "Actually, Secretary Nielsen, one side was wrong: the white supremacists & neo-Nazis chanting 'Jews will not replace us,' he wrote. "This moral equivalence is disgraceful coming from anyone, let alone the head of the Department of Homeland Security."

Nielsen also received an unintentional laugh from her audience when she told them that Trump "loves diverse opinions," and "craves different points of views."

This story has been corrected to better reflect Secretary Nielsen's comments

Kirstjen Nielsen Doubles Down On Trump's Infamous 'Both Sides' Comment

By Lydia O'Connor

[Huffington Post](#), July 19, 2018

It's been nearly a year since a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, turned deadly for one counter-protester, and members of President Donald Trump's administration are still struggling to condemn the demonstration's Nazi ideology.

While Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen was speaking at the Aspen Security Forum on Thursday, a reporter pressed her to say whether Trump's inflammatory remark in the aftermath of the violence — that there were "very fine people on both sides" of the rally — affected her ability to keep Americans safe.

"When he placed blame on, in his words, 'on both sides,' does that make your job harder, when the president says things that, at least in [white supremacist] communities, are viewed as, 'He's got our back?'" NBC News correspondent Peter Alexander asked Nielsen during their sit-down.

The DHS secretary eventually echoed the president's controversial statement in her response.

"No matter who it is, I think what's important about that conversation is, it's not that one side is right, one side is wrong," Nielsen said. "Anybody that is advocating violence, we need to work to mitigate."

You can see the full exchange below, about 47 minutes into the video.

Nielsen also suggested that the violence at the Charlottesville rally may have been prompted by outside actors.

"Maybe there were different — whether it was foreign influence or different purposeful attempts to get both sides, if you will, aggressively pitted against each other," she said.

Homeland Security Chief Kirstjen Nielsen Blames Both Sides For Violence In Charlottesville

By Tess Owen

[Vice](#), July 19, 2018

Homeland Security chief Kirstjen Nielsen repeated President Trump's position that "both sides" were to blame for the violence during the white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, last August that left dozens of counter-protesters injured and one dead.

"It's not that one side is right and one side is wrong," Nielsen told Peter Alexander from NBC News at a national security conference in Colorado on Thursday. "Anybody that is advocating violence, we need to work to mitigate."

Alexander had asked Nielsen whether the moral equivalency Trump drew between the white supremacists in Charlottesville and those protesting, which included antifa, made her job harder.

Nielsen was also asked about whether Homeland Security had prioritized the threat of far-right extremism since Charlottesville, and what it had been doing to address it.

"DHS has made a priority to focus on all forms of violence," Nielsen replied. "We obviously have what we had been traditionally looking at, out of radical Islam. We have the homegrown extremists, whatever camp they fall in. We also have white supremacists or other groups who self-profess that their purpose or motive is violence."

Homeland Security chief Kirstjen Nielsen repeated President Trump's position that "both sides" were to blame for the violence during the white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, last August that left dozens of counter-protesters injured and one dead.

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fall in. We also have white supremacists or other groups who self-profess that their purpose or motive is violence.”

Nielsen said that, to address extremism across the board, DHS was looking at “counter-messaging” and “off-ramping,” which is the term she uses to get someone off the path of radicalization.

In the year since the Charlottesville rally, some of the white supremacists who carried out violent acts there have been charged and are now facing jail time. Most recently, the Justice Department filed 29 federal hate crime charges against James Alex Fields, the young neo-Nazi accused of ramming his car into a crowd of counterprotesters, leaving one dead and injuring dozens.

Fields is also facing state murder charges for the death of Heather Heyer, a protester. Other participants in the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville may also be looking at jail time for their actions. Two white supremacists were convicted earlier this year on charges linked to the violent beating of DeAndre Harris, a black man, and two more have charges pending.

DHS Secretary Nielsen Appears Hesitant To Condemn Violent White Supremacists

By Summer Meza

[The Week](#), July 19, 2018

Even without giving definitive answers, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen is drawing plenty of scrutiny.

While attending the Aspen Security Forum on Thursday, Nielsen was forced to immediately backtrack on her claim that Russia didn't favor President Trump when interfering in the 2016 election. On other matters, however, she opted to double down rather than 'fess up.

Vice reports that Nielsen was asked about Trump's comments about the white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, last year, where white nationalist demonstrators were confronted by counterprotesters. When violence broke out, a counterprotester was killed, and multiple people have since been charged with malicious wounding of a black man who was protesting the rally.

Trump was widely criticized for saying that there were “very fine people on both sides” of the incident, a comment that Nielsen was asked about Thursday. She reportedly said that “it's not that one side was right and one side was wrong,” and added that “anybody that is advocating violence, we need to work to mitigate.”

Nielsen additionally dodged a question about the Trump administration's focus on countering white supremacist violence overall. GQ correspondent Julia Ioffe reports that Nielsen instead addressed “Islamic

radicalism,” again noting that she takes all violence seriously. Summer Meza

DHS NEWS

Trump Administration Will Keep Protected Status For Somalis

By Colleen Long, Amy Forliti

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) – The Trump administration said Thursday that Somalis granted special immigration status in the U.S. can keep the designation, making them one of the few groups permitted to stay in the U.S. under a program that has allowed them to remain here for years.

Somalia was first designated for the special status in 1991, following the collapse of the authoritarian Siad Barre regime, and the designation had been extended in part because nationals feared returning because of the ongoing armed conflict there. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen cited the armed conflict and other extraordinary conditions in supporting the continuation of Somalia's designation for about 500 people.

But the administration will not take on new applicants, disappointing advocacy groups.

Those already with the status will be able to remain in the U.S. and will be allowed to work through March 17, 2020.

Many Somalis have settled in Minnesota, which has the largest Somali population in the U.S. Community and immigration advocates have said that returning to Somalia would be a death sentence for some and that it would separate families.

Democratic Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton wrote a letter to President Donald Trump on Tuesday, urging him to extend the special status. Dayton's letter said the conditions in Somalia are treacherous, and he pointed to a recent State Department advisory that tells people to avoid traveling to Somalia because of crime, terrorism and piracy. The advisory says those who do travel to Somalia should draft a will before traveling, name a family member to be a point of contact in the event of a hostage situation and leave a DNA sample in case it is needed to identify remains.

“Under those conditions, it would be horribly ‘Un-American’ to force innocent people to return to Somalia, to break up many of their families, and to forgo their chances to live safe and decent lives,” Dayton wrote.

Members of Congress, including Democratic Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith of Minnesota, also wrote to the president, urging that the status be extended.

Advocates for Somali nationals who are living in the U.S. said Thursday they are relieved that about 500 Somalis will be able to reregister to extend their protected status for 18 months, but they are disappointed the administration didn't do more. The Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations said if the administration would have redesignated the status instead of just extending it, then more than 1,000 Somali nationals could have enrolled.

The International Rescue Committee and Muslim Advocates also expressed disappointment.

"It is not only a mistake, it is a death sentence," Muslim Advocates said in a statement.

Around 437,000 immigrants from 10 countries have had temporary protected status, a designation created in 1990 to allow people from countries ravaged by natural disasters like earthquakes or man-made disasters like war to have a short-term safe haven.

Those with it have generally been able to work and, with permission, travel outside the U.S. and return.

Countries are added to the list as circumstances warrant, with renewals coming usually around every 18 months. While some countries were removed, others have stayed on for years, which critics say turns the program into default amnesty. Other countries that had the status for long periods of time – like El Salvador or Honduras – were cut off under Trump.

The protections were never meant to be permanent.

Under Trump, the Department of Homeland Security also ended the program for Sudan, Nicaragua, Nepal and Haiti. Several groups are suing to stay in the U.S.

Protections were extended for about 1,100 Yemenis and 6,900 Syrians who already have them, but the administration has said it won't take on new applicants.

Trump has said he wants to curtail legal immigration and has been cracking down broadly on illegal immigration.

Forliti reported from Minneapolis.

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U.S. Lets Somali Immigrants Stay 18 More Months

By Reuters Staff

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Temporary Legal Status Extended For Hundreds Of Somalis

By Chris Serres

[Minneapolis Star Tribune](#), July 19, 2018

The Trump administration said it will extend temporary legal protections for Somalis who live in the United States, saving hundreds of people from the prospect of deportation back to the war-ravaged country.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen on Thursday announced an 18-month extension of temporary legal status for approximately 500 Somalis who now live and work in the United States, citing the ongoing armed conflict and "extraordinary and temporary conditions" in the country.

The decision to extend the designation saves many Somali families — including some who have lived and worked here for nearly three decades — from having to make an agonizing decision over whether to stay and risk deportation. Those who chose to stay would live in constant fear and anxiety over being deported back to a country where chronic armed conflict and a devastating drought have led to mass displacement, and where large swaths of the nation are controlled by the Somali Islamic terror group al-Shabab.

"If this program had not been extended, then hundreds would have been forced into this Orwellian choice — either go into hiding [in the U.S.], or leave and be permanently deprived of love and companionship," said John Keller, executive director of the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota. "The odds would have been very high that you would never see your family again."

Temporary protected status, known as TPS, was created by Congress to provide haven for immigrants who have fled countries wracked by violence, natural disasters and other forms of civil strife that prevent their safe return.

The extension allows current Somali TPS beneficiaries to re-register for TPS and remain in the United States with work authorization through March 17, 2020, according to an announcement from the Department of Homeland Security.

Ongoing conflict

The protections were first extended to Somalia in 1991 under President George H.W. Bush in response to a clan-driven civil war that followed the collapse of the authoritarian Siad Barre regime. The designation has been extended 22 times since then, shielding many

Somalis from deportation and enabling them to build families and businesses here.

A decision to end temporary protections for Somalis, advocates had warned, would have torn apart many families who have been living and working in the country legally for years. That's because many TPS holders are married to legal immigrants and have children who are U.S. citizens.

The announcement to extend TPS to Somalis came as a surprise to some immigration attorneys and activists, given President Donald Trump's increasingly hard-line stance on immigration and his past comments that were critical of Somali refugees. During the 2016 campaign, Trump suggested that Somali refugees were not being properly vetted and were turning Minnesota into a hotbed for terror groups. "The state is having tremendous problems," Trump said at a campaign stop. Soon after his election, Trump imposed a travel ban on Somalia and several other Muslim-majority countries.

Since last year, the administration has stripped protections for more than 400,000 immigrants from countries that have suffered ongoing violence, political unrest or natural disasters. The countries that have lost protected status include El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua and Sudan. Immigration attorneys and activists have questioned the decisions, arguing that conditions in a number of these countries have actually worsened.

In Somalia's case, it appears that the Department of Homeland Security took careful consideration of conditions on the ground. Last October, Somalia experienced its worst-ever terrorist attack when a massive truck bombing in the capital of Mogadishu killed 512 people. And just last week, the U.S. State Department issued a travel advisory for Somalia, saying violent crimes, including kidnapping and murder, are widespread throughout the country.

In January 2017, the Department of Homeland Security said Somalia had more than 1.1 million displaced residents as a result of ongoing armed conflict and a severe drought, as well as some of the highest malnutrition rates in the world. "Somalia continues to experience a complex protracted emergency that is one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world," the federal agency said last year in extending the designation.

"No one in their right mind would voluntarily return to Somalia right now," said Mustafa Jumale, co-founder of the Black Immigrant Collective, an advocacy group for black immigrants and their families.

In explaining its decision Thursday, the Department of Homeland Security released a statement saying, "After carefully reviewing conditions in Somalia with interagency partners, Secretary Nielsen determined the

ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions that support Somalia's current designation for TPS continue to exist."

Political pressure

Days before the announcement, the Trump administration received a barrage of letters from elected officials, both in Minnesota and in Washington, D.C. Last week, 83 members of Congress, including Democratic Rep. Keith Ellison of Minnesota, sent a letter to Nielsen and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urging them to redesignate the program for Somalia and extend the program for 18 months. DFL Gov. Mark Dayton and Minnesota's U.S. senators, Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, also sent letters, citing the security risks of sending people back to the war-torn country. The protections were set to expire Sept. 17.

"The case [for extending TPS] was so strong," Klobuchar said Thursday. "You have people who have literally grown up here and have raised their kids here. ... The alternative would be sending them home to a place that is still experiencing major terrorism attacks."

Even so, the decision by the Department of Homeland Security is narrow in scope and only extends protections to the roughly 500 Somali TPS beneficiaries who now live in the United States. Advocates in the Somali community sought to have Somalia redesignated as a protected country, which is broader and last occurred under the Obama administration in 2012.

However, DHS opted not to redesignate Somalia. As a result, Somalis who began residing in the United States after May 2012 are not eligible for protections. And those who are currently benefiting from the temporary program are still in legal limbo, with no clear path toward citizenship, immigration attorneys said.

"It would have been an embarrassment if the Trump administration had stopped TPS, but they did not do any service for Somalis by only extending" the protections to current beneficiaries, said Jaylani Hussein, executive director of the Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. "Thousands are left behind with no protections at all."

Trump Administration Says Somalis Can Keep Protected Immigration Status

By Colleen Long

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration said Thursday that Somalis granted special immigration status in the U.S. can keep the designation, making them one of the few groups permitted to stay in the U.S. under a program that has allowed them to remain here for years.

Those already with the status will be able to remain in the U.S. and will be allowed to work through March 17, 2020.

Somalia was first designated for the special status in 1991, following the collapse of the authoritarian Siad Barre regime, and the designation had been extended in part because nationals feared returning because of the ongoing armed conflict there. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen cited the armed conflict and other extraordinary conditions in supporting the continuation of Somalia's designation for about 500 people.

But the administration will not take on new applicants.

Those already with the status will be able to remain in the U.S. and will be allowed to work through March 17, 2020.

Many Somalis have settled in Minnesota, which has the largest Somali population in the U.S. Community and immigration advocates have said that returning to Somalia would be a death sentence for some and that it would separate families.

Democratic Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton wrote a letter to President Donald Trump on Tuesday, urging him to extend the special status. Dayton's letter said the conditions in Somalia are treacherous, and he pointed to a recent State Department advisory that tells people to avoid traveling to Somalia because of crime, terrorism and piracy. The advisory says those who do travel to Somalia should draft a will before traveling, name a family member to be a point of contact in the event of a hostage situation and leave a DNA sample in case it is needed to identify remains.

"Under those conditions, it would be horribly 'Un-American' to force innocent people to return to Somalia, to break up many of their families, and to forgo their chances to live safe and decent lives," Dayton wrote.

Members of Congress, including Democratic Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith of Minnesota, also wrote to the president, urging that the status be extended.

Around 437,000 immigrants from 10 countries have had temporary protected status, a designation created in 1990 to allow people from countries ravaged by natural disasters like earthquakes or man-made disasters like war to have a short-term safe haven.

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Countries are added to the list as circumstances warrant, with renewals coming usually around every 18 months. While some countries were removed, others have stayed on for years, which critics say turns the program into default amnesty. Other countries that had

the status for long periods of time — like El Salvador or Honduras — were cut off under Trump.

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The Latest: Advocates Say Extension For Somalis Not Enough

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on the Trump administration's decision to extend protected status for Somalis (all times local):

Advocates for Somali nationals who are living in the United States say they are disappointed that the Trump administration chose to extend — and not redesignate — a special protected status for Somalis.

The Department of Homeland Security said Thursday it would renew temporary protected status for about 500 people because of armed conflict and other extraordinary conditions.

The Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the International Rescue Committee and Muslim Advocates all say they are relieved that about 500 Somalis will be able to re-register to extend their protected status for 18 months. But they say that if the administration would have redesignated the status, more than 1,000 Somali nationals could have enrolled.

The International Rescue Committee says extending the status sends a signal that the administration recognizes Somalia is unsafe, but failing to redesignate the status leaves some Somalis at risk.

The Trump administration is continuing the special immigration status granted for nearly two decades to people from Somalia.

The Department of Homeland Security said Thursday that it would renew temporary protected status for about 500 people because of armed conflict and other extraordinary conditions.

As many as 437,000 immigrants affected by extreme violence or disaster had the status, which allowed them to work. DHS has discontinued the status for nearly all the groups, including Honduras, El Salvador, Sudan, Nicaragua and Haiti. The department recently continued the special immigration status for Yemen.

President Donald Trump's supporters note the protections were never meant to be permanent.

Many Somalis have settled in Minnesota. Community and immigration advocates have said returning to Somalia would be a death sentence for some and would separate families.

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Local Somali Leader Says Temporary Protected Status Extension A 'Relief'

By Kim Hyatt

[Forum of Fargo-Moorhead \(ND\)](#), July 19, 2018

FARGO — For many Somalis living in Fargo-Moorhead, an announcement made by the President Donald Trump administration Thursday, July 19, was a relief.

"It's great news," said Hukun Abdullahi, Executive Director of the Afro American Development Association in Moorhead.

Abdullahi said he was "hopeful" after first hearing about the 18-month extension of the Temporary Protected Status for Somalia.

"I know a lot Somalis who are on TPS," he said. "I'm excited to explain to them it doesn't affect you guys. A lot needs to be done, but now this is a relief."

Those on TPS are granted special immigration status to stay in the U.S. from countries experiencing war, disease or a natural disaster. TPS protects those individuals from being detained and makes them eligible for employment here.

With the program's extension, those Somalis with special status can stay in the U.S. through March 2020.

Abdullahi said his organization works with more than 400 new Americans, and while most are from Somalia, not all are under TPS status.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., released a statement on the TPS extension saying there are approximately 150,000 Somalis — both refugees and non-refugees — living in the U.S. Nearly a third of them live in Minnesota, which has the largest Somali population in the U.S.

"Conditions in Somalia remain dire, and the Administration recognized this and extended Temporary

Protected Status for Somalia," Klobuchar said. "I've always believed that our country's strength comes from the diversity of our people. Somali people in Minnesota and across the U.S. deserve to continue living, working, and succeeding here, as they have for decades."

Abdullahi said with the current administration, "you don't know what they will come out with" 18 months from now. Despite the potential uncertainty, he said he is optimistic.

"This is an uplifting thing," he said.

DHS Extends Temporary Protected Status For Somalis

By Nicole Narea

[Law360](#), July 19, 2018

Law360 (July 19, 2018, 6:34 PM EDT) — The Department of Homeland Security announced Thursday that approximately 500 Somalis can stay in the United States for another 18 months due to Somalia's ongoing armed conflict, extending the temporary protected status that the department has ended for citizens of other countries.

Since November, the Trump administration has given notice to tens of thousands of people from six nations that it planned to cut off the "temporary protected status" that allowed them to lawfully live, work and study in the United States, after determining that the...

BORDER SECURITY

Prosecutors Dismiss Immigrant Transporting Case Against Chicano Activist

By Guillermo Contreras

[San Antonio Express-News](#), July 19, 2018

Prosecutors in San Antonio have dismissed immigrant transporting charges against a Chicano activist and lawyer arrested this month after allegedly picking up a pair of undocumented immigrants in rural Dimmit County.

Armando Treviño, 71, of Laredo was scheduled for a preliminary hearing Thursday in San Antonio, but it was canceled because the U.S. attorney's office dismissed a criminal complaint Wednesday, records show.

Prosecutors declined comment Thursday, and neither Treviño nor his lawyer could be reached for comment.

Treviño was part of the 1960s movement in Crystal City that led to student walkouts in protest of discrimination against Mexican-Americans, who were subjected to treatment such as being forced to sit at the

back of the classroom, barred from speaking Spanish and banned from eating Mexican food in the cafeteria. He was also a Chicano political activist at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, then known as Texas A&I.

The affidavit of the criminal complaint filed against Treviño said an off-duty Border Patrol agent traveling north on U.S. 83 about 4:30 p.m. July 2 reported seeing two men he believed to be undocumented immigrants get into a maroon Toyota SUV beside the road.

Border Patrol agents from the Cotulla station traveling west on FM 133, which connects U.S. 83 to Interstate 35, pulled over a vehicle matching the description heading east with three occupants. They arrested Treviño, who was driving, and two Honduran men.

The immigrants said they had each paid smugglers \$2,500 to be taken to San Antonio but that their guide abandoned them after they crossed the Rio Grande and walked for a day through the South Texas brush. The pair tried to catch a ride, and the driver of the SUV made a U-turn to pick them up, the affidavit states. Treviño said he couldn't take them to San Antonio but would give them a ride as far north as possible, one Honduran told agents.

Acquaintances of Treviño said in prior interviews that they believed that he picked up the immigrants out of humanitarian concern, not to smuggle them.

Guillermo Contreras covers federal court and immigration news in the San Antonio and Bexar County area. Read him on our free site, mySA.com, and on our subscriber site, ExpressNews.com. | gcontreras@express-news.net | Twitter: [@gmaninfedland](https://twitter.com/gmaninfedland)

CBP Officers Find \$122K Worth In Meth Hidden In Car Doors

By Crystal Bedoya

[KYMA-TV Yuma \(AZ\)](#), July 19, 2018

ANDRADE, Calif. –

Around \$122,000 worth of methamphetamine was found inside the doors of a vehicle by Customs and Border Protection officers at the Andrade Port of Entry Wednesday afternoon.

At approximately 3:30 p.m., a canine team alerted to a 2009 Toyota Corolla that was driven by a 44-year-old man. During the inspection, a canine team helped officers discover 39 wrapped packages of methamphetamine and one package of heroin inside the doors of the Toyota.

The narcotics' weight was 45 pounds of meth and one pound of heroin with a combined estimated street value of \$122,000.

"The officer's ability to interdict contraband at the port of entry is a good example of CBP's effort to secure our border, and prevents these dangerous drugs from entering our community," said Andrade Acting Port Director Martin Cuesta.

The driver, a Mexicali citizen who resides in Mexicali, Baja California, was arrested for an alleged narcotics smuggling attempt. He was turned over to Homeland Security Investigation and later transported to Imperial County Jail.

The narcotics and vehicle were seized by CBP.

AVIATION SECURITY

TSA Launches New Training Program For Airport Screeners, But The Union Is Not Impressed

By Hugo Martin

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 19, 2018

Faced with an unusually high turnover rate among airport screeners, the Transportation Security Administration is starting a program to "foster career growth" by letting screeners learn new skills while on the job.

The union representing TSA workers likes the sentiment, but says the program, which launches Aug. 5, doesn't go far enough.

With demand for air travel continuing to grow and airports getting increasingly crowded, a robust team of TSA screeners at the nation's airports has never been more important. But the TSA has had a hard time retaining screeners, with the turnover rate among TSA officers as high as 19%, according to a congressional budget report.

With that in mind, the TSA announced a program earlier this month to help newly hired screeners learn new skills on the job, such as operating the X-ray machine or the full-body scanner, among other things. The TSA officers who agree to train the new screeners while on the job will be paid an extra \$300 per quarter, on top of their regular salary.

"We are committed to investing in our transportation security officers by giving them the tools they need to grow," TSA Administrator David Pekoske said in a statement.

But Bobby Orozco Jr., a TSA screener at Los Angeles International Airport and president of the local union for TSA workers, said the program doesn't guarantee promotions and the pay increase is a one-time, lump sum that doesn't count toward higher retirement benefits.

Will the program reduce the TSA turnover rate? "Not at all," he said, suggesting instead that the agency adopt a system for giving screeners raises more quickly.

Asked to respond to criticism of the program, TSA spokesman Michael England said the program "provides a transparent career path that directly links officer pay to skill and position, and increases technical and leadership training at each level."

TSA Testing 3D Screening Of Carry-on Bags With American At JFK This Month

By Bart Jansen

[USA Today](#), July 19, 2018

The Transportation Security Administration announced Thursday that it will soon begin testing a 3D scanner for carry-on bags with American Airlines at New York's JFK airport.

TSA has been testing "computed tomography" (CT) machines at airports in Phoenix Terminal 4 and Boston Terminal E since June 2017. The test at JFK is expected to begin in late July with a ConneCT scanner from Analogic Corp.

TSA has already used the technology on checked luggage for years, but the machines were too big and heavy to install at many checkpoints.

As the size has become more manageable, TSA expects the technology to improve security while hastening checkpoint lines because TSA officers won't have to search cluttered bags by hand as often.

"Use of CT technology substantially improves TSA's threat detection capability at a checkpoint," said TSA Administrator David Pekoske. "This partnership will allow us to deploy new technology quickly and see an immediate improvement in security effectiveness."

TSA has been testing CT machines from three manufacturers: Analogic, Integrated Defense and Security Solutions and L3 Technologies. Pekoske has said he hopes to test 40 machines across the country this year, and the budget proposal that Congress is debating for next year included \$71 million for 145 of the machines.

"The Congress has been very supportive of CT technology," said Mark Laustra, Analogic's vice president of business development and government relations. "TSA is on a very aggressive path to deploy systems quickly."

One advantage of 3D technology to standard two-dimensional X-ray, which is what most travelers see at airport checkpoints, is that a TSA officer can rotate the image digitally to examine a suspicious item without unpacking a bag.

The color image can also be programmed to highlight suspicious materials, which could one day reduce the need for removing laptops or separating larger containers of liquids from carry-on bags.

"They're cramming more into their carry-on bags, so it's more difficult for a 2D X-ray to see through that clutter," Laustra said. "Not only do we have a better detection system, the passenger throughput should also increase."

José Freig, American's chief security officer, said the partnership with Analogic and TSA will transform aviation security with state-of-the-art CT technology to the security checkpoint.

"At American, we are always looking at ways to invest in technology that raises the bar on global aviation security while improving the customer experience," he said.

Westminster Man Walked Through TSA Checkpoint At BWI With Knife, No Boarding Pass

[Baltimore Sun](#), July 13, 2018

A Westminster man managed to walk through a Transportation Security Administration checkpoint at BWI Marshall Airport with a knife in his waistband and no boarding pass on the night before the Fourth of July, authorities confirmed Thursday.

John Edward Hill, Jr., 23, was stopped just after 11:30 p.m. while trying to open a secured door at a gate in the airport's international E Concourse — at which point airline employees realized he did not have a boarding pass, according to Maryland Transportation Authority Police.

MdTA police officers responded with a canine unit and patted Hill down, finding "a small knife" in his waistband, said an MdTA police spokesman, Cpl. Edward Bartlinski.

Hill was charged with interfering with security procedures, tampering with security systems, entering a restricted area without authorization and possession of unauthorized weapons prohibited in an airport, according to court records.

A trial has been set for Oct. 19 in Glen Burnie District Court.

Hill is being held without bond, according to court records.

The public defender's office in Glen Burnie, which is representing him, has not yet assigned the case to an attorney. A man who answered the phone at a number listed for John Edward Hill, Sr., in Westminster, declined to comment.

FBI agents assigned to the airport assisted in the investigation, Bartlinski said. Authorities do not believe Hill was attempting to hijack a plane.

"We're not quite sure what he was trying to do," Bartlinski said. "There's no nexus to terrorism here, I want to make that clear."

Hill is not cooperating with investigators, he said.

A spokesman for Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport did not respond to a request for comment Thursday.

The TSA immediately began an internal review to determine how Hill was able to walk through the security checkpoint without scanning a ticket — and how the knife went undiscovered during the screening process, agency spokeswoman Lisa Farbstein said in a statement.

"A review of this event determined that the individual intentionally circumvented the ticket document checking station," Farbstein said. "Immediate measures were taken to review the techniques of the TSA officers who were working at the checkpoint, to ensure they are employing the proper protocols."

The incident was a double failure on the TSA's part, said Jeffrey Price, an aviation security expert and professor at the Metropolitan State University of Denver.

"The first failure resulted, obviously, in TSA not checking his documents," Price said. "The second failure was the ability to get through a checkpoint with a weapon."

Whether Hill went through a body-imaging X-ray machine or a metal detector or not, the knife should have triggered a pat-down search at the security screening, Price said. If it did, the search was insufficient, he said.

Given that Hill is accused of intentionally evading security with the weapon, Price said, the FBI likely will interview him to determine whether his motive was to show weaknesses in the system or test it for some future criminal purpose.

"In either case, the greater problem is that the enemies of our country and criminals willing to do criminal activity within aviation are all still paying attention to how this guy managed to penetrate into the sterile area, and learning from it," he said.

The TSA is long overdue for an overhaul, Price said. He suggested more training for TSA officers, "so that they are more like Customs and Border Protection personnel."

"It's time to look at some new approaches to aviation security," he said.

Farbstein said the airline employees who stopped Hill are one of the "multiple layers of security to protect the traveling public."

The TSA takes the discovery of knives and other prohibited items seriously, Farbstein said, but noted "they are unlikely to cause catastrophic damage on an aircraft."

"In today's post-9/11 security environment, intelligence tells us our officers' greatest focus remains on the biggest threat to aviation today — explosives and explosives components," she said.

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Careful With That Light Saber: TSA Offers Tips On Hauling Comic-Con Merch

By Fredrick Kunkle

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

The Transportation Security Administration wants sci-fi and comic book aficionados to know that it's perfectly okay to board a commercial airline with a full-scale Star Wars blaster.

It just has to go into checked luggage, along with any other replica weapons one might score at Comic-Con International, whose annual gathering opens Thursday in San Diego.

A year after United Airlines created a small blip in the time-space continuum by banning comic books in checked bags — supposedly at the behest of the TSA — the federal agency this week issued friendly neighborhood pointers so fans could avoid Comic-Con-related hassles at airport checkpoints or heartbreak over damaged collector's items. It turns out that stacks of DC and Marvel classics, not to mention brochures and magazines, are best tucked in carry-ons than stowed in checked bags, the TSA says.

"Every year during Comic-Con International, our officers have issues with the various items that people purchase and then either carry-on or place in their checked bags," the TSA said on its blog. "These come in the form of figurines, costume items (including replica and real weapons) and other mementos that generally alarm our checkpoint and checked baggage screening systems and result in a bag check."

First, the TSA urges collectors to mail purchased items in their original, sealed packaging instead of flying with them. This will avoid possible damage to the packaging by an inquisitive TSA officer.

The TSA also urges people to pack replicas of weapons in checked baggage. Unlike real firearms, no declaration is necessary, the blog says. It also notes that anything resembling an explosive is forbidden from flying at all.

The TSA says carry-on is preferred for comic book stacks because putting them in checked bags can trigger

alarms that necessitate bag searches, which can create delays and cause bags to miss their flights. When in doubt, people are advised to ask the TSA about an item through Twitter @AskTSA.

‘Serial Stowaway’ Deemed Fit To Stand Trial, Must Wear Ankle Monitor, Judge Rules

By Katherine Lam

[Fox News](#), July 19, 2018

A woman dubbed a “serial stowaway” was deemed fit to stand trial and ordered by a judge on Wednesday to wear a GPS-equipped monitoring device following her release from a state mental health hospital.

Marilyn Hartman, 66, was ordered by Cook County Judge Maura Slattery-Boyle to stay clear of any airport, train station or bus station while she’s awaiting for trial — a request that has proved to be challenging for the “serial stowaway” in the past.

Hartman was allowed to be transferred to a private facility called “A Safe Haven.”

Hartman faces several charges stemming from two January arrests. Four months ago, Slattery-Boyle said Hartman was unfit to stand trial and ordered her to a mental health facility in Elgin.

On Wednesday, the judge changed her decision and saw improvements in Hartman.

“She was oriented, she was cooperative, there was no agitation,” the judge said about Hartman, according to the Chicago Tribune. “She understood the difference between a bench and a jury trial.”

“She understood about not going to an airport,” Slattery-Boyle added.

Dr. Matthew Markos also testified that Hartman was cooperating with the treatment plan created for the serial airport offender. He added that Hartman never tried to escape the mental health hospital.

An electronic monitoring device hasn’t stopped Hartman from heading to an airport in the past. She was arrested in February 2016 at Chicago O’Hare International Airport at a bus shuttle system with a GPS device still strapped on her ankle.

Hartman was taken into custody in late January after she allegedly refused to leave the airport, just two days after she was released from jail. She was arrested earlier that month when she bypassed Transportation Security Administration checkpoint at the O’Hare airport and boarded a British Airways flight without a ticket or boarding pass. She was caught in London.

She faces felony criminal trespass and felony burglary charges.

he Associated Press contributed to this report.

Katherine Lam is a breaking and trending news digital producer for Fox News. Follow her on Twitter at @bykatherinelam

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Trump: Democrats Have ‘A Death Wish’ With The ‘Abolish ICE’ Movement

By Gabriella Muñoz

[Washington Times](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump said Thursday that Democrats’ call to “Abolish ICE” is a “death wish” that could cost them during the midterms.

The president said the rival party’s stance on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is “a death wish — in more ways than one.”

The Democrats have a death wish, in more ways than one — they actually want to abolish ICE. This should cost them heavily in the Midterms. Yesterday, the Republicans overwhelmingly passed a bill supporting ICE! — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 19, 2018

House Republicans refused to vote on Democrats’ “Abolish ICE” bill on Wednesday and instead passed a nonbinding resolution praising the work done by the agency.

Democrats are divided over calls to end ICE, with demands to abolish the agency rooted in the more progressive side of the party.

Gallup: Immigration Is The Top Issue For Voters Heading Into Midterm Elections

By Will Racke

[Daily Caller](#), July 19, 2018

Immigration is the number one answer when Americans are asked what issue is the most pressing problem facing the country, according to Gallup’s latest poll.

In fact, the share of people who say immigration is the most important issue is higher now than at any time in the past 17 years that Gallup has been asking the question.

The Gallup poll, released Wednesday, found that 22 percent of Americans said in July that immigration tops their list of concerns, edging out the 19 percent who said “dissatisfaction with the government.” That is an eight-point bump since June, when just 14 percent put immigration at the top of the list.

The sharp rise comes as the nation is embroiled in a debate over President Donald Trump’s immigration policies, including a recent crackdown on illegal border crossings and tighter asylum standards that exclude

most Central American migrants. The Trump administration says the tough approach is needed to deter illegal immigration, but activists and the president's political opponents say the policies are cruel and, in some cases, illegal. (RELATED: Trump Administration Applies Sessions' Strict Asylum Standards To 'Credible Fear' Process)

Rising concern over immigration is a bipartisan phenomenon, according to the Gallup poll. Among Republicans, Democrats, and self-described independents, more than twice as many respondents in July said immigration was the top issue as they did in August 2017.

Even so, the share of Republicans citing immigration as the most pressing issue was about twice as large as the share of Democrats, according to Gallup. Among Republicans, 35 percent said immigration was their top concern, while 18 percent of Democrats said the same.

The discrepancy could play to the advantage of the GOP as it seeks to retain majorities in both the House and Senate. GOP candidates who identify with Trump's immigration policies will likely enjoy strong support heading into the November elections because Republican voters continue to place a comparatively high importance on immigration.

"If the general immigration focus continues through the fall, GOP candidates may be able to fire up the enthusiasm of the part of their base highly concerned about immigration and that in turn favors the Republican approach to this issue," Gallup noted in an analysis of its survey.

The Gallup poll is based on telephone interviews conducted July 1-11 with a random sample of 1,033 adults in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. It has a margin of error of 4 percentage points and a 95 percent confidence level.

Immigration Surges To Top Of Most Important Problem List

By Gallup

[Gallup](#), July 18, 2018

Immigration has risen to the top of the list when Americans are asked to name the most important problem facing the nation – edging out the government, which has been the top issue each month since January 2017. The 22% of Americans in July who say immigration is the top problem is up from 14% in June and is the highest percentage naming that issue in Gallup's history of asking the "most important problem" question. The previous high had been 19%.

Mentions of immigration as the nation's most important problem have averaged 5% over the 17 years Gallup has been asking the question on a monthly basis. When Americans' naming of immigration as the top problem has exceeded that average by a significant margin, it has reflected real-world events, political attention being paid to the topic, fluctuating salience of other issues and news coverage.

Immigration reached 19% of mentions as the top problem facing the nation in April 2006, as Congress was wrestling with the effort to pass a comprehensive immigration bill and as immigration protests in cities across the country dominated news coverage. Citations of immigration as the top problem rose again in the summer of 2014, as news attention focused on large numbers of immigrants attempting to enter the U.S. from Central America.

Concerns over immigration have spiked again at points over the past two years, reflecting President Donald Trump's continued focus on illegal immigration, and the administration's often controversial policies designed to deal with the issue. The July survey came as news outlets and social media focused on reports of children being separated from their parents in response to Trump administration policies of apprehending families entering the country illegally. Trump subsequently modified that policy. The administration has also increased the actions of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency in finding and deporting individuals living and working in the country illegally.

Now, in Gallup's July 1-11 update, immigration has risen to the historical high point of 22%, topping the most important problem list for only the second time in Gallup's history. The other was in July 2014, when waves of minors migrating from Central America crossed the Southern U.S. border.

Both Republicans and Democrats More Likely to Mention Immigration in July

Republicans have become increasingly likely this year to name immigration as the nation's top problem, while, until recently, mentions of immigration had remained relatively low among independents and Democrats.

This month, Republican views of immigration as the top problem have spiked to 35% from 21% in June. But the issue is becoming more top of mind to independents and Democrats as well; 18% of Democrats cited immigration this month, up from 10% in June, and independents' mentions are up four percentage points, to 17%.

Immigration has jumped among Republicans as the top problem at other points in recent times –

including 29% last February, when it became a major sticking point in congressional debate on a new budget bill. At that time, however, mentions of immigration among independents (12%) and especially Democrats (5%) remained relatively low.

Of course, partisan groups almost certainly have differing reasons for viewing immigration as the top problem currently. Republicans are likely thinking of the underlying problem of illegal immigration per se and its impact on the nation's economy and crime situation, while Democrats may be thinking more about the negative impact of the Trump administration's policies and actions in cracking down on immigration.

The partisan divide on immigration is not new. In April 2006, the previous high point for immigration as the most important problem (19% overall), 30% of Republicans, 16% of independents and 11% of Democrats named immigration as the top problem. In July 2014, when overall concerns about immigration reached 17%, the partisan split was 23% Republicans, 16% independents and 11% Democrats.

Immigration and Government Only Two Problems With Double-Digit Mentions

The 19% of Americans who cite government as the top problem in July is not out of line with what Gallup has found in recent months. Race relations or racism is mentioned by 7%, with concerns about unifying the country and lack of respect for each other coming in at 6% each.

Americans' Views of the Top Problem Facing the U.S.

Problems mentioned by at least 3% of respondents in July

One significant takeaway from Gallup's recent updates on the nation's top problem continues to be the absence of concern about the economy.

Just 4% of Americans say the "economy in general" is the top problem. Smaller numbers of Americans mention jobs and unemployment, the federal budget deficit, foreign trade, taxes and other economically related issues. When these are grouped together, the economy receives 14% of mentions, tied with March of this year for the second-lowest net economy mentions in Gallup's 27-year history of grouping economic concerns on a net basis. The lowest, 13%, came in May 1999.

By contrast, net economic issues exceeded 75% nine times as the nation's top problem in 2008, 2009 and 2011, including the high point of 86% in February 2009.

Minor Differences in Top Five Problems for Republicans, Independents and Democrats

The 35% of Republicans who say immigration is the country's top problem is over twice as high as the 15% who mention government.

Government continues to be viewed as the top problem among Democrats, with the 27% mentioning that issue well ahead of the 18% naming immigration. Independents this month are equally likely to cite immigration and government (17% each).

Overall, four problems make the top five list for all three partisan groups: immigration, government, unifying the country and lack of respect for each other. The economy and moral/ethical decline (tied) round out the top five list for Republicans, while race issues complete the top five for the other two groups.

The midterm congressional elections are now less than four months away, and the growing prevalence of immigration in Republicans' perceptions of the most important problem facing the nation could make it a fruitful theme for GOP candidates working to retain their party's House and Senate advantages.

President Trump's successful 2016 presidential campaign rested in part on his controversial proposals relating to immigration. He has continued to ratchet up the focus on the issue since taking office through his policy proposals and actions at the border, particularly the highly visible separation of children from parents who cross into the country illegally. Trump's administration has modified its policies on the separation of children and parents. But if the general immigration focus continues through the fall, GOP candidates may be able to fire up the enthusiasm of the part of their base highly concerned about immigration and that in turn favors the Republican approach to this issue.

Of course, to a lesser degree, with a rising percentage of Democrats mentioning immigration as the top problem, Democratic candidates can also gain traction on the issue – by registering their opposition to Trump and Republican policies and actions.

The most recent Gallup survey was in the field over the first 11 days of July. Since then, news coverage of the Trump administration has shifted to foreign policy with Trump's controversial travels to Brussels, London and Helsinki.

Still, immigration has been a significant top-of-mind concern for Americans, particularly Republicans, for a number of months now, and it's likely that it will remain an important campaign theme no matter what events occur between now and Election Day in November.

Results for this Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted July 1-11, 2018, with a random sample of 1,033 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. For results based on the total sample of national adults, the margin

of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting.

Each sample of national adults includes a minimum quota of 70% cellphone respondents and 30% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial methods.

View survey methodology, complete question responses and trends.

These Migrants Were Separated From Their Children — And Aren't Sure They Should Be Reunited

By Kevin Sieff

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

The United States government separated their family at the border, leaving them with an agonizing choice.

José Ottoniel was deported to Guatemala in June, a month into President Trump's "zero tolerance" crackdown. But his 10-year-old son, Ervin, who made the journey with him, remained in Texas.

Now, back in this hilltop village, José and his wife, Elvia, need to decide what to do with their son, who is at a migrant shelter 1,700 miles away.

While the U.S. government scrambles to reunify migrant families separated at the border, some parents, such as the Ottoniels, think that the best option for their children might be the thing they most dread — to remain apart.

"It's not that we don't love him," said José, 27. "It's that we want him to have a better chance at life."

José and Elvia are pushing for Ervin to remain in the United States — away from the crushing poverty of his birthplace. Elvia, 31, has a cousin in Arkansas who agreed to take him in. The couple explained the situation to Ervin on the phone. They hung up, and they cried.

Ervin Ottoniel was the top-ranked third-grader at the village's elementary school. He drew pictures of himself holding a laptop. He told his parents he wanted to be a lawyer. They told him they couldn't afford his schooling beyond sixth grade. His father earns \$21 a week.

The Ottoniels know that if Ervin returns to Las Nueces, his life would be a foregone conclusion — sporadic work on a coffee plantation, helping pay off his father's debts. But if he stays in the United States, he might not see his parents or siblings for years.

"Right now, we think it's best for him to have this opportunity in the United States, to get out of this place," José said.

Other families are making similar calculations. Although they never planned to leave children alone in the United States, the White House policy of separating families, along with the swift deportation of some parents, has forced the question: What's best for a separated child?

Immigration lawyers estimate that between 180 and 400 parents have been deported without their children since Trump's "zero tolerance" policy began in May. Now, legal-aid organizations are reaching out to those migrants to see whether they would like their children to return home.

"This is uncharted territory," said Wendy Young, the president of Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), an organization that works with immigrant families. "Some of these parents are living in communities where there is no protection for their children, where they have no choice."

That's the case for Ana Lopez, who lives in El Carmen, a town about 50 miles from the Ottoniels' home. She is trying to find a way for her son, Endil, separated from his father at the border in June, to remain with his grandparents in Maryland. For months, she said, the family in Guatemala has faced threats from a local criminal group.

"How can I bring him back to a place where it's too dangerous for him to attend school?" Lopez said through tears.

In Las Nueces, a town that traces a dirt road up the side of a mountain, where almost every man is a miner or a farmer or unemployed, the question of what to do with Ervin Ottoniel is discussed almost everywhere. His parents asked the town's priest, the Guatemalan consulate in the United States, the school's principal and their own parents for advice.

"We believe this is what's best for him, but not everyone agrees," Elvia said.

"It's 50-50," José said.

As soon as they leave the house, the question comes up.

"So what's going to happen?" asked Walter Lemos, one of José's uncles, at his home one afternoon.

"Even the boy prefers to stay in America," José responded. "He knows there's more for him there."

"But there's no love like a parent's love," Lemos said under his breath, shaking his head.

José stopped attending school after third grade to work on a farm. Elvia dropped out after second grade to look after her younger siblings. They named Ervin after an engineer José had worked for in a local silver mine, the best-educated person he'd ever met.

Public school is technically free here, but parents have to pay for books, uniforms, materials and teacher fees — costs that can amount to around \$150 per year.

"I already told Ervin that we won't be able to afford that for much longer," José said. "He became very angry. He's a very motivated boy."

Traveling to the United States was an imperfect solution. José paid \$7,500 to a smuggler, most of it borrowed from a bank. The plan was for José to work and for Ervin to study. Elvia and the other three children would remain in Las Nueces until, they hoped, José and Ervin could get some kind of legal status, so they could move back and forth freely.

They didn't know about the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy, which involved criminally prosecuting all illegal border-crossers and removing the adults from their children. When they were separated in early June, José lied to Ervin so he wouldn't start crying. "They're taking you to school, and they're taking me to work," he said. It was the last time they saw each other.

José was taken to an immigration detention center in South Texas, where agents told him that if he didn't agree to be promptly deported back to Guatemala, he would be detained for as long as six months during legal proceedings — without seeing his son. He could work on his son's case from Guatemala, they said, and seek to have Ervin remain in the United States or to return home.

Back in Las Nueces, José and Elvia hear twice a week from Ervin, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Each call lasts 10 minutes. José is never sure what time the calls will come, so he sits outside his squat house, between two yucca trees, where there is a phone signal, waiting.

When Ervin calls, his voice is faint.

"It's like he doesn't have the energy he used to have," José said. "It's like he's weaker or something."

"We asked him his opinion," Elvia said. "What does he want to do? He said he wants to stay in the U.S."

"But we know it's a lot for a boy to take on," added José.

The logistics of keeping Ervin in the United States are complicated. He has been reclassified as an unaccompanied minor. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which deals with such youths, could vet his cousins to make sure they are capable of caring for Ervin. He could then apply for legal status.

Lawyers across the United States are struggling to figure out how to handle these cases, and some worry that the children could be deported even if their parents protest.

"What we would like to see is for the child and parents to have an opportunity to speak to attorneys,

and then for there to be a consultation so that the family can make a decision," said Young, of KIND.

One of the challenges in Ervin's case is that his cousin in Arkansas is undocumented. He paints houses and does construction jobs, earning about \$3,000 a month. He has two small children, both American citizens by birth. In the past, immigration authorities have been willing to release immigrant children to relatives in the country who do not have legal status.

"As a father, I know it's difficult to not see your child for a long time, but I've lived in America for 10 years, and I can tell you that life is better here for Ervin," said the cousin, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of concerns about immigration enforcement.

Migrants have been leaving Las Nueces for decades, sending back money that helps build the largest homes and buy the nicest trucks in town. In a place with little well-paid work, José is surrounded by proof that traveling to the United States is the only guarantee of a decent life.

Earlier this month, he called the smuggler who took him to the United States in June and asked whether he would consider helping him get back to the border, given the failure of the first trip, given Ervin's separation.

"He refused," José said.

He still owes \$4,000 that he borrowed to pay the smuggler, a loan he can't imagine paying back, even though he knows the bank might eventually seize his home. A recent study on migration from Guatemala by scholars at the University of Arizona said that such debts could be pushing thousands into homelessness.

"What can I provide to my son here?" he asked.

Once a week, a group from the local church comes to pray for Ervin. The congregants take turns putting their hands on Elvia's forehead. When they arrived this past Sunday, she was wailing.

"Ervin, wherever he is, only you can protect him, God," the group intoned.

When they left, Elvia held her youngest son, 1-year-old Dilan, her eyes still red.

"It's impossible to know what's best for our son," she said.

A neighbor, Maria Segura, stopped by the house.

"He's an exceptional child," she said. "But how is he going to be happy without his parents?"

Elvia didn't answer. Later, she pulled out mementos, forming a small shrine to her oldest son.

A photo of Ervin standing next to the Guatemalan flag. A photo of him wearing a tie, arms linked with a girl in a tiara. The sash, neatly folded, that he got to wear for being first in his class.

"He's a special child," Elvia said.

Then she pulled out the piece of paper U.S. government employees had given José before he was deported. “Are you looking for information about a child who has arrived in the United States?” it said in Spanish.

Below it was a 1-800 number she couldn’t afford to call.

José returned from an afternoon of work in the coffee fields. The other children were picking up the photos of Ervin, looking at them quietly.

“We know they miss their brother,” José said. “I don’t know what to tell them.”

In D.C. Command Center, Officials Work To Reunite Migrant Children By Court Deadline

By Nick Miroff, Maria Sacchetti And Amy Goldstein
[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

Inside an emergency command bunker high above the Mall, teams of federal workers are sifting through the case files of migrant children, matching them to parents in U.S. immigration jails and planning their reunions.

The room on the sixth floor of the Department of Health and Human Services’ Hubert H. Humphrey Building, with banks of computer terminals and wraparound television screens, is typically used to handle public health epidemics or hurricanes.

But this is a cleanup operation of a different sort.

A federal judge has ordered the government to return, by next Thursday, as many as possible of the more than 2,500 migrant children seized from their parents during the Trump administration’s ill-fated “zero tolerance” crackdown on families who cross the border illegally.

HHS officials in charge of the operation say they are doing everything they can to give the children back quickly and safely, working round-the-clock to meet U.S. District Judge Dana M. Sabraw’s deadline, or least demonstrate enough progress to keep him convinced it’s a good-faith effort.

On Thursday the agency allowed a small group of reporters to see their emergency responders toiling inside the Secretary’s Operations Center at HHS.

The work is slow. Separations that took minutes require weeks to repair, coordinated among multiple federal agencies and layered with background checks and fraud safeguards. HHS had to improvise a parent-child reunification system on the fly because the Trump administration didn’t have one until a few weeks ago.

But after Trump caved to public outrage and abruptly froze his family-separation system, Sabraw issued an injunction giving the government 30 days to reunite the children with their mothers and fathers.

“This is a novel process,” said Cmdr. Jonathan White, a social worker and top HHS emergency-response official working in the bunker. Short and trim, with wire-rimmed glasses and khaki fatigues, he is the kind of fast-talking fix-it-man usually flown in after catastrophe strikes.

This time he has been deployed deep into the federal bureaucracy, figuring out how the government can quickly confirm parental relationships and run criminal background checks before delivering children to their mothers and fathers at immigration jails scattered along the border.

“We’ve never had a flow of children to ICE facilities,” said White, referring to adult detention centers run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. “That’s new for us.”

In most cases, parents being reunited with their children are fitted with an ankle monitoring bracelet, assigned a court date and released. The government can’t continue to hold them en masse, because U.S. courts don’t allow children to be jailed long-term in adult detention facilities and ICE’s “family residential centers” are mostly full.

By midnight Wednesday, federal officials had reunited 364 of the 2,500 children ages 5 to 17 with their parents, according to a court filing Thursday. Officials said they have identified 1,600 adults who may be eligible to be reunited with their children, but only about half have been interviewed and cleared. Slightly more than 90 have been deemed ineligible because of criminal records and other reasons, but hundreds of cases are still pending review.

The work of reuniting migrant families was further complicated, HHS officials said Thursday, because case workers started the process with no clear way of knowing who among the nearly 12,000 migrant children in federal custody after crossing the border were those taken from their parents.

The problem was plain to see in the HHS software shown to reporters, which lacks a data-entry field to label children who are separated minors. Unless the U.S. border agents who took the families into custody included such details in the “notes” field of a child case file, there was nothing to distinguish the separated children from the much larger group of underage migrants who arrived in the United States without a parent.

The data system was designed to process such “Unaccompanied Alien Children,” and place them with sponsors, agency spokesman Mark Webber said. “What it wasn’t designed to do is the quick match” with parents.

When Sabraw issued his June 26 injunction ordering the separated minors to be swiftly returned,

case workers had to go through files by hand to build a new database, said Chris Meekins, chief of staff for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response.

Top officials were enlisted in an effort that took “600 to 700 man-hours,” Meekins said. “Even the [HHS] Secretary [Alex Azar] did it for a period of time.”

HHS said it has about 50 case workers at headquarters dedicated to meeting the court-ordered reunification deadlines, and another 200 staffers and contractors elsewhere. The department has not said what it is spending to ensure compliance with the judge’s orders.

Those working on the effort at the terminals in the emergency command center Thursday included senior agency officials such as Maggie Wynne, an HHS counselor who is the agency’s former director of anti-trafficking policy.

Wynne has worked for years to ensure that the agency doesn’t hand over migrant children to traffickers, sex offenders or others who would endanger their welfare.

The extensive safeguards that she and others have put in place became a source of tension during court proceedings last week, when Sabraw told HHS to speed up the vetting process by only running exhaustive checks when there’s cause for concern.

Wynne lamented that the expedited process constitutes a “lower threshold” for reunions.

Sabraw issued his ruling in response to a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union before the administration’s zero-tolerance policy at the border took effect.

His order gave the government until July 10 to reunite about 100 children ages 4 and under with their parents. HHS said last week that it has reunited slightly more than half of that group. Others could not be returned because their parents had been deported, had criminal histories of varying severity or were serving time in jail. Parents who were not eligible to regain custody by the judge’s deadlines can seek to reunite with their children later.

For the older group, federal officials have said they planned to reunite up to 200 children a day. Most had been matched to a parent as of Monday, officials said this week, but background checks remained pending for hundreds of the parents.

At least some of the reunifications completed so far were not executed smoothly; court records describe widespread confusion about release dates and times, and instances of children returned to parents late in the middle of the night.

The Trump administration this week published a bulletin, titled “The Tri-Department Plan for Stage II of Family Reunifications,” that gives a step-by-step guide to the vetting process.

It said HHS performs background checks on parents using Homeland Security and FBI databases, while working to confirm the adult who arrived with the child is the actual parent. If “red flags” sow doubts, the agency will use DNA testing.

Case managers assess potential risks to “child safety” that could include possible threats to the child, according to the plan. Absent major concerns, HHS interviews the parent to make sure they wish to be reunited with the child, and makes arrangements to escort the child to the parent.

At that point ICE will decide whether to offer the family supervised release. This is Step 5, visualized in the government’s plan by a tiny hand cradled in a larger one.

More Than 300 Older Children Split At Border Are Reunited

By Elliot Spagat And Nomaan Merchant
[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

SAN DIEGO (AP) – The Trump administration said Thursday that it has reunified 364 children ages 5 and older with their families after they were separated at the border, still leaving hundreds to go before a court-imposed deadline a week away.

The Justice Department reaffirmed in a court filing that it has identified 2,551 children who may be covered by U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw’s order. More than 900 are either “not eligible or not yet known to the eligible,” the vast majority of them undergoing evaluation to verify parentage and ensure the children are safe.

ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt said he was concerned about the high number of children who have not been cleared for reunification.

The administration and the American Civil Liberties Union are due back in court Friday for the fifth time in two weeks as the judge holds tightly to a July 26 deadline for all children to be reunified. He set an earlier deadline of July 10 for dozens of children under 5.

The government has identified eight U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement locations to reunify children 5 and older, and people have been getting released throughout the Southwest this week.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service are taking the lead on helping families that have been released into the U.S. Faith-based groups provide food, clothing, legal

aid and often money for a bus or a plane ticket, usually for them to join relatives across the country.

Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas, has served dozens of families. The shelter's director, Ruben Garcia, said "the actual reunification process is a logistical nightmare."

On Monday, the judge put a temporary hold on deporting parents while the government prepares a response to the ACLU's request for parents to have at least one week to decide whether to pursue asylum in the U.S. after they are reunited with their children.

— Merchant reported from Houston.

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Hundreds Of Families Reunited But Several Hundred More To Go By Judge's Deadline

By Kristina Davis

[San Diego Union-Tribune](#), July 19, 2018

With one week left under a federal judge's deadline to reunify families separated at the border, the Trump administration on Thursday said 364 children age 5 and older have rejoined their parents.

That's only a fraction of the 2,551 children in that age group who've been identified for possible reunification.

The government's latest status report on the effort does not speculate on whether it will make the July 26 deadline, only saying that the new truncated process to match up families and clear parents for reunification "is proceeding."

U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw in San Diego, who is overseeing the reunification effort as part of a preliminary injunction he granted, has set a hearing for Friday afternoon to discuss the progress.

The families are being released into the community on parole rather than being detained together — the same as families of children younger than 5 who were reunited under an earlier deadline this month.

The families are being dropped off at the offices of local social service organizations, which are equipped to assist them with immediate basic needs such as transportation and clothing, according to the court filing.

Of the roughly 1,600 parents possibly eligible for reunification, 848 parents have been cleared, 272 are awaiting a final interview and others are still in the vetting process or are no longer in immigration custody and must be tracked down.

Authorities say they have identified 91 parents so far with a criminal record or other disqualifier that makes them ineligible for reunification. Additionally, more than 100 parents declined to be reunified with their children when asked during an interview.

Authorities cautioned that the numbers reflect reports as of midnight Wednesday and are unofficial.

The reunification process includes using official records, interviews or other observations to confirm the parent-child relationship, as well as background checks on the parents. DNA testing is being used in cases where there are red flags. Eligible parents currently in immigration custody are being moved to one of eight facilities where they undergo a final interview by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Children who are in shelters spread across the country are being brought to the facilities, joined with their parents, then released. Officials have not identified which facilities are being used.

Authorities say more than 700 parents have final orders of removal, but for now they remain in a holding pattern due to a Monday court order that prohibits the government from deporting newly reunited families.

The American Civil Liberties Union has asked for a seven-day period between family reunification and removal to give the parents time to consult with a child advocate or attorney to decide if the children have viable claims to contest their own immigration cases.

"These parents may only have a matter of days to make the momentous decision whether to leave their child behind in the United States," ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt urged in Thursday's joint briefing.

Sabraw had been reluctant to impose such an order earlier last week but changed his mind a few days later by granting a temporary injunction that halts removals.

The removal issue will be argued separately in a hearing on Monday.

The ACLU complained that the government has continued to fall behind in providing information on the parents who fall into the various categories of eligibility. The ACLU proposed deadlines spread over the next few days for authorities to provide lists of parents either released from ICE custody, deported or with final removal orders.

The massive reunification effort is tied to a class-action lawsuit filed by the ACLU in San Diego. The two named plaintiffs are women who claimed asylum at a port of entry and crossed the border illegally and had their children taken from them. Both families have since been reunited.

The government has been working to streamline its processes since its first efforts to reunite children under age 5 earlier this month.

The deadline of July 10 was not met in that instance, with some of the 57 children being reunited in the days that followed due to “logistical” reasons. Many other children were determined to have parents who were ineligible for various reasons, including criminal records. The ACLU is still working to help find the 12 parents in that age group who have already been deported.

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Trump Administration: 1,606 Parents Possibly Eligible For Reunification With Kids

By Laura Jarrett

[CNN](#), July 19, 2018

(CNN)Facing a looming deadline to reunite of hundreds of migrant families by next week, the Trump administration said Thursday it had found at least 1,606 parents potentially eligible for reunification with their children, but more than 900 may not be at this point.

According to the latest estimates provided in a court filing Thursday, 2,551 children aged between 5 and 17 were separated from their parents at the border, and thus far, 364 from that group have been reunited.

Of the parents the government claims are ineligible for reunification, two are in state or federal custody, 136 “waived” reunification rights when interviewed, 91 had a criminal record or were otherwise deemed ineligible. But, the largest group – mostly likely to cause further questions – are 679 that require “further evaluation.”

Last month, San Diego-based US District Court Judge Dana Sabraw ordered all children over 5 to be reunited with their parents by July 26, but determining which parents are eligible for a speedy reunification has been a persistent challenge for the Trump administration over the past month.

As a result, the judge ordered the government to provide regular updates to the court and complete any needed parentage verifications for those currently in ICE custody by Thursday, as well as turn over a list of parents in ICE custody who are ineligible for reunification at this point. Those orders are all in the hopes of getting out ahead of any situations that would require further investigation, like those seen in the youngest group of children reunited with parents earlier this month.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which sued to reunite the families, said Thursday that it had yet to receive “critical” information from the government,

including a list of those parents who had been deported or had final removal orders making them eligible for deportation.

“This information is especially critical for parents with removal orders,” ACLU lawyers wrote. “These parents may only have a matter of days to make the momentous decision whether to leave their child behind in the United States.”

As for the 679 parents who require “further evaluation,” Lee Gelernt, the Deputy Director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, told CNN: “That's a very large number but the government as usual has not provided us sufficient information to evaluate these cases.”

The parties will be back in court Friday afternoon.

Justice Department Says 1,606 Kids Over 5 Could Be Eligible For Reunification

By Kartikay Mehrotra

[Bloomberg News](#), July 19, 2018

The Justice Department said that of as many as 2,551 children over age 5 separated from their parents in the Trump administration's “zero tolerance” border-crossing crackdown, 1,606 are “possibly eligible” to rejoin their families.

In a joint status report Thursday in federal court in San Diego to the judge overseeing the process, the government said 364 children have been reunited with their parents. The Justice Department said 848 have been cleared for reunification, while the remainder are pending interviews, release by Immigration and Customs Enforcement or review by the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

The government previously said it returned 58 children under the age of 5 to their parents, bringing the total to 422.

U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw scheduled a hearing Friday to discuss the government's update. Last month he ordered all the children reunited by July 26.

The case is Ms. L. et al v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement et al, 18-cv-428, U.S District Court, Southern District of California (San Diego).

Judges Are Skeptical The Trump Administration Will Reunite Separated Families When It's Supposed To

By Zoe Tillman

[BuzzFeed](#), July 19, 2018

Some judges aren't convinced the government will be able to meet a court-ordered deadline to reunite parents and children separated at the border by the end of the month.

In the past two weeks, two federal judges — one in Chicago and one in Washington, DC — ordered the administration to reunite separated parents and children who filed individual lawsuits, setting deadlines before the nationwide July 26 reunification deadline set by US District Judge Dana Sabraw. The judges rejected the Justice Department's arguments that multiple orders would interfere with the administration's reunification efforts, concluding that the harm suffered by separated children required immediate action.

The orders are a harbinger of litigation to come if the administration fails to meet Sabraw's deadline. Karen Hoffman, a lawyer in one of the Chicago cases where a judge ordered faster reunifications, said more lawsuits on behalf of individual families are likely if the government has trouble reunifying the families covered under Sabraw's order.

"If it becomes necessary we absolutely would file more complaints," she said.

The judges in Chicago and DC pointed to the administration's struggles in meeting Sabraw's deadlines so far. In a July 9 opinion, US District Judge Edmond Chang in Chicago wrote that "the solidity of the government's prior representations that the deadlines will be met has waned." This week, US District Judge Paul Friedman wrote that any burden the government faced in complying with multiple reunification orders was "self-inflicted."

The government has identified 2,551 separated children ages 5 to 17 in government custody who may be eligible for reunification with a parent under Sabraw's order. The administration has already reunited several dozen children under age 5 under an earlier deadline set by Sabraw. Federal officials deemed a number of parents ineligible because of criminal histories, but also said they would need more time for reunifications because the parents had been released into the United States or deported, and the government was still trying to find them.

According to a reunification plan submitted by the Justice Department to the court, the administration is focusing its efforts initially on screening parents who are still in the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. At a court hearing earlier this week, a Justice Department lawyer said that the Office of Refugee Resettlement, which manages the detention of migrant children, had cleared the detained parents of 1,317 children for reunification. The parents also need to be cleared by ICE — of those cleared by ORR, the parents of 918 children had been cleared for reunification by ICE, the parents of 51 children had not been cleared by ICE, and the parents of 348 children were undergoing reviews.

Earlier this week, Sabraw temporarily blocked the administration from deporting reunified families while he considers a request by the American Civil Liberties Union for a longer-term order restricting the government from immediately removing reunited families from the country.

The class action before Sabraw, who sits in San Diego, has been the primary legal vehicle for family reunifications, but more than a half dozen lawsuits on behalf of individual parents and children have been filed in federal courts across the country. In a case filed in Massachusetts, a motion for immediate reunification was withdrawn July 16, before the judge had a chance to rule, because the mother and her son were reunited.

Chang in his July 9 ruling ordered the government to reunite two families within 72 hours. He noted that in the California case, the government already had asked for more time to reunite families and had trouble meeting Sabraw's deadline for parents who were released from ICE custody.

"In this situation, which all began with 'a chaotic circumstance of the Government's own making,' ... it is appropriate to consider Plaintiffs' request for reunification with a skeptical eye to the government's prior representations," Chang wrote, quoting from Sabraw's June family reunification order.

Chang wrote that although all separated children were suffering, the lawyers for the two children in the case before him, referred to by the initials W.S.R. and C.D.A., presented evidence that they were facing "extreme irreparable harm."

"It might be that many other sons and daughters of Ms. L. II class members would be able to compile the same record evidence if they had the lawyers and resources to do so. But the fact of the matter is that W.S.R. and C.D.A. have proven that every day of separation is causing dangerous harm to their mental health," Chang wrote.

On July 18, US District Judge Paul Friedman entered orders in two different cases requiring the government to reunite two families who sued by July 20. Like Chang, Friedman pointed to the government's difficulties complying with Sabraw's order, writing that the July 26 deadline was "not guaranteed." If the government had to commit more resources to reunification efforts in order to comply with multiple court orders, so be it, Friedman wrote.

"Given the gravity of the harm at issue, the need to expend resources cannot outweigh these threats to constitutional rights," Friedman wrote. "The harm to defendants is self-inflicted: defendants embarked on a zero-tolerance policy, bringing misdemeanor charges and separating thousands of children from their parents,

without a plan for reunification after the short, time-served sentences for improper entry into the United States.”

At least one judge has sided with the government and denied a request for immediate reunification. On July 13, US District Judge Victor Bolden in Connecticut ordered the government to take steps to provide trauma treatment for separated children, but said he would “avoid duplicating the California Order and the relief provided by that court.”

A Justice Department spokesperson declined to comment.

Trump's Immigration Policies Were Supposed To Make The Border Safer. Experts Say The Opposite Is Happening.

By Ray Sanchez, Nick Valencia And Tal Kopan
[CNN](#), July 19, 2018

(CNN)Before US immigration authorities detained him and took his son, the Honduran migrant said he spent three days in the hands of armed men who identified themselves as members of the Gulf Cartel.

Christian, who did not want his full name used, said he was traveling to the US border with his 7-year-old last month when the men stopped a bus full of migrants in the northeastern Mexican state of Tamaulipas. The demanded \$300 from each family.

“They told us if we didn’t pay that they were going to kill us,” recalled Christian, who said he was freed three days later after relatives wired money to his captors.

“There were 30 of us. There was another building next to where we were being held and they said there were even more people there.”

President Donald Trump has said that he wants immigration policy that secures the border. But his aggressive policy has instead resulted in organized crime groups preying on droves of desperate asylum seekers who have been turned away by US authorities, according to people familiar with the smuggling operations.

Documents reveal DHS knew ending protections could cause more, not less, illegal immigration

Experts said the administration’s now-reversed policy of prosecuting parents who cross the border illegally – thus separating children from their families – and the elimination of domestic violence and gang violence as grounds for asylum is having another result: Further strengthening ties between human smugglers, other organized crime groups and corrupt local law enforcement along the border.

“Ironically, these policies that claim to be trying to clamp down and secure the border and stop smuggling and stop traffickers... actually empower the traffickers, the cartels, the smugglers,” says Michelle Brané, director of the Migrant Rights and Justice program at the Women’s Refugee Commission.

Christian and his son eventually reached the US, where immigration authorities detained them and separated him from his son in mid June. He said he was held at the Port Isabel Detention Center in Texas, where he claims he went nearly two weeks without word of his son’s whereabouts. After a month in detention, he was released and reunited with the boy. He has a court date next month.

But the trauma of the journey to America started days before he crossed the Rio Grande.

Christian said he had fled the violence of his homeland but was then detained by men who said they were part of the Gulf Cartel, which has an extensive transnational network in Central and South America. They repeatedly threatened the more than two dozen migrants who slept on the floor of a house in Mexico. The migrants came from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. The youngest was about 12 months old.

“My child was with me the whole time,” Christian said. “He would just bury his face into me for protection.”

With a deadline looming, the US can’t find parents of 71 children it may have separated

While organized crime groups along the border have long preyed on US-bound migrants, experts said the administration’s immigration policy has increased the desperation of those migrants, as well as the demand for smugglers and the cost for their services.

That desperation increased after nearly 3,000 children were separated from their parents as a result of the White House’s now-reversed zero tolerance immigration policy, according to experts and advocates.

The cost for clandestine passage into the US for migrants from Central America has soared from \$6,000 to \$8,000 a couple of years ago to about \$12,000 today, according to Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, a professor at George Mason University and an expert on organized crime and immigration.

“An unforeseen consequence of this (immigration crackdown) is the strengthening of criminal groups that are very organized and smugglers that are transnational and have connections with different groups,” she said. “You create these monsters in reality with your own policies.”

The money collected from the migrants helps grease sophisticated smuggling networks involving drivers, guides, stash houses, corrupt local police and

people with links to criminal organizations, including the drug cartels, she said.

"The connections between organized crime and migrant smugglers are becoming tighter," Correa-Cabrera said.

"They are lords of the routes, of these dangerous journeys. They manage because they have the connections with local police, the cartels and other criminal groups."

'Human smuggling business has taken off'

Juan Francisco Loureiro said he came across 15 Central American migrants sitting together earlier this month in the food court of a shopping center in the Mexican border city of Nogales.

"I asked if they needed anything," said Loureiro, who runs a small migrant shelter a couple of miles south of the border from Nogales' sister city in Arizona.

A migrant said they were waiting for the smuggler who delivered them there. The guide told them to stay inside to avoid the US Border Patrol agents, according to Loureiro.

"You're still in Mexico," Loureiro told them.

"They told us we were in the United States," the migrant said.

They refused to believe him. Loureiro said he offered to take them to the San Juan Bosco shelter, which he has run for more than 30 years. They insisted on waiting.

In Nogales, Loureiro said human traffickers have been capitalizing on Washington's stricter enforcement actions since a caravan of Central American migrants seeking asylum arrived at the US-Mexico border in May.

"They see the desperation of people and they're taking advantage," he said. "The human smuggling business has taken off since the caravan. The smugglers prefer migrants with family in the US. They know family members will respond when they demand money."

Loureiro said migrants at the shelter have told him smugglers have been going around seeking families with relatives north of the border.

"We see people who waited up to 15 or 20 days trying to get across the bridge legally and then we don't see them again," he said. "Many eventually connect with smugglers who prey on their desperation."

'More people are going to be assassinated'

The administration's new policy of rejecting asylum claims based on fears of gang and domestic violence will result in potentially thousands of people being turned away before they can plead their cases in court.

Immigration lawyers and advocates said turning away traumatized immigrants puts their lives at risk immediately upon their return home.

"More people are going to be assassinated, more people are going to suffer from domestic violence, more people are going to die," said Carlos Garcia, an immigration attorney in McAllen, Texas. "That's the reality. When I go and talk to them at the detention center ... they look at me and they tell me, 'I can't go back.'"

More and more migrants, especially women with young children, will turn to smugglers, according to experts.

"More powerful criminal groups means more corruption, more instability and – contrary to the Trump administration's wishes – more migration," Steven Dudley, co-director of InSight Crime, a foundation that studies organized crime in the Americas, wrote in an analysis last month.

Brané, director of the Migrant Rights and Justice program at the Women's Refugee Commission, said the desperation of migrants makes them more vulnerable to exploitation by criminal groups.

"We see migrants who don't have the money to pay these higher prices but are that much more desperate, and so then you start seeing a market for traffickers saying you can pay me off when we get to the other side, and that's when the smuggling turns into trafficking," she said.

CNN's Ed Lavandera, Leyla Santiago and Rosa Flores contributed to this report.

A Census Citizenship Question Looked Suspect From The Start. Now A Judge Agrees.

By Editorial Board

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S decision to add a question about citizenship to the 2020 Census from the start has looked suspiciously like an underhanded way to depress Democratic representation in Washington. Now a federal judge is saying so, remarking in court this month that there is a strong appearance of "bad faith" and that the Trump administration's rationale for adding the question appears to be nothing more than pretext.

Eighteen state attorneys general, as well as D.C. and other smaller jurisdictions, are suing to stop the Census Bureau from inquiring about people's citizenship status, and U.S. District Judge Jesse Furman presides over the case. The suit is young, but Mr. Furman has already said that the challengers made a "strong showing" that the administration's reasons for adding the question are suspicious. Mr. Furman authorized the challengers to collect records and take depositions.

Mr. Furman pointed to seemingly contradictory statements from Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, who oversees the Census Bureau. When he added the citizenship question to the 2020 Census form, he insisted that he did so in response to a Justice Department request for better data on the voting-age population in various parts of the country, which Justice lawyers could use in voting rights cases. Yet in a June memorandum, Mr. Ross stated, "Soon after my appointment as Secretary of Commerce, I began considering various fundamental issues regarding the upcoming 2020 Census, including funding and content," considerations that would have come before Justice formally weighed in. "Part of these considerations included whether to reinstate a citizenship question, which other senior Administration officials had previously raised."

It is unclear which "senior Administration officials" pressed to add the question, but former White House political operative and immigration foe Stephen K. Bannon is a likely possibility, given evidence in other court records. Adding yet another reason for skepticism about the administration's motives, Mr. Furman noted that the Trump Justice Department "has shown little interest in enforcing the Voting Rights Act," raising questions about why Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a renowned immigration hawk, would be so interested in a major policy change at the Census Bureau.

The real answer is probably that seemingly small changes to the census form can have massive effects on government spending and congressional representation. A lot of federal funding is distributed based on states' total population. So are congressional seats. Adding a citizenship question on a form sent by an administration explicitly hostile to migrants is highly likely to depress response rates among immigrants, even those who have naturalized. This would make urban centers in blue states look less populous and, therefore, less deserving of money and representation.

Instead of continuing to contest the lawsuit, Mr. Ross should eliminate the new question.

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

ICE 'Will Not Be Deterred By Threats' From 'Abolish ICE' Movement, New Acting Director Says

By Chantal Da Silva

[Newsweek](#), July 19, 2018

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency's recently appointed Acting Director Ronald Vitiello has said the agency "will not be deterred by

threats" from the growing movement calling on the Trump administration to abolish the agency.

Vitiello made the statement in response to a non-binding resolution in support of ICE that passed in the House on Wednesday by a 244-35 vote.

Welcoming the result, Vitiello said in a statement published on ICE's website: "I am grateful to the members of Congress who today publicly declared their support for the brave, dedicated men and women of ICE. We will continue to fulfill our sworn oaths to enforce federal immigration and customs laws."

"ICE plays a critical role in protecting public safety and our national security, from combatting the illegal drug trade to removing public safety threats from our communities," he said, adding that "our workforce continues to carry out their important mission and we will not be deterred by threats against our agency."

The immigration and customs agency has increasingly been put on the defense amid growing calls for it to be abolished amid fallout from the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" family separation policy, which President Donald Trump rescinded last month.

A number of prominent Democratic senators, including Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, and Independent Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont have railed against the agency, joining calls for it to be dissolved.

Other politicians, including New York Mayor Bill de Blasio and congressional candidate Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, have also been vocal in calling for the agency to be shut down.

Read more: [Trump Says Democrats Have 'Death Wish' Over Calls to Abolish ICE Ahead of Midterm Elections](#)

The agency has even been condemned by its own members, with 19 high-ranking employees within the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) branch of ICE recently coming together to sign a letter demanding that its arm tasked with deporting most undocumented immigrants be dissolved, arguing that its reputation has put the work of the HSI unit at risk.

In the letter, the agents stated that ICE has become "perceived as targeting undocumented aliens, instead of the transnational criminal organizations that facilitate cross-border crimes impacting our communities and national security," and that as a result, its work has been undermined.

Vitiello has vowed to continue ICE's mission, despite the agency's detractors.

The acting director assumed the position as ICE's new leader last month following former ICE chief Thomas Homan's resignation.

Vitiello began his career as a U.S. Border Patrol agent in Laredo, Texas, in 1985 and has served in law enforcement for more than 30 years since, including serving as acting deputy commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection before assuming the role of ICE chief.

Senate Democrats Question ICE Arrests Of Spouses Of U.S. Citizens

By Niels Lesniewski

[CQ Roll Call \(DC\)](#), July 19, 2018

Some Senate Democrats are alarmed by what may be a pattern of ICE making arrests when immigrants are conducting routine business at citizenship and immigration services offices.

In a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and the acting Immigration and Customs Enforcement chief Ronald Vitiello, a group of 10 Senate Democrats cited examples of married couples being separated at USCIS facilities when one partner may not have legal status but the other member of the couple is an American citizen.

"Although both couples were legally married, the undocumented spouses in each case had outstanding deportation orders that they were trying to remedy through the appropriate process as prescribed in U.S. law," the senators wrote. "Ripping apart families and punishing those who are trying to come out of the shadows does not make us safer, nor is it the best use of ICE's time and resources. Moreover, it sends a chilling effect to other immigrants who seek to adjust their status and therefore must interact with USCIS."

Sen. Robert Menendez of New Jersey led the letter, which was dated Wednesday and circulated publicly on Thursday.

The prospect of immigrants being arrested for reasons other than pressing national security or criminal considerations at the facilities could be problematic. The senators noted that USCIS is not designed as an enforcement agency.

In fact, the U.S. government used to combine administrative and enforcement functions under the old Immigration and Naturalization Service, but that was redesigned.

"Immigrants come to USCIS with the expectation that they will be interviewed in good faith. Reports that these interviews have resulted in arrests have instilled fear in undocumented immigrants who now feel increased pressure to remain in the shadows," the senators wrote. "Therefore, the current practice illustrates the recklessness of the administration's

immigration priorities and contradicts its assertions that it is going after immigrants who are serious criminals."

In Contentious Back-and-forth, Philly Officials Say ICE 'Likely' Violates Data-sharing Agreement

By Anna Orso, Patricia Madej, Joseph A. Gambardello

[Philly \(PA\)](#), July 19, 2018

Top members of Mayor Kenney's administration believe federal immigration officials are likely violating a data-sharing arrangement, a stance revealed this week in a contentious back-and-forth between city officials and local leadership of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Last Thursday, City Solicitor Marcel S. Pratt requested that local ICE officials meet with administration leadership to discuss how the agency is using the Preliminary Arraignment Reporting System (PARS), a city-operated database of arrests and bail information that is shared with ICE via a contract that ends Aug. 31. The arrangement is a sticking point for immigration rights activists, who fear ICE has breached the contract by using its access to target noncriminal undocumented immigrants, including victims of or witnesses to crimes.

City spokesperson Deana Gamble said senior administration officials met Wednesday with ICE, saying only that "the meeting was very productive, and there may be some follow-up exchanges." ICE officials did not respond to a request for comment.

But before that meeting, ICE field office director Simona L. Flores sent a letter Monday in which she said that ICE was not in breach of its contract and that the city has failed to provide any examples of such conduct.

"The suggestion that ICE is specifically going after known victims and witnesses to crimes, and utilizing PARS for that purpose, is entirely baseless," she wrote. Flores added that ICE was not engaging in "racial profiling" by ascertaining arrestees' immigration status based on race or ethnicity data relayed via PARS.

However, she also wrote that ICE "lawfully uses" information about an arrestee's country of birth "as part of its investigatory efforts." She also indicated that ICE would not be in violation of the PARS contract if it arrested a law-abiding undocumented immigrant it encountered in the process of pursuing a person who was arrested or charged with a crime.

In a letter sent Wednesday, Pratt shot back, writing that ICE's use of the database "likely violates the spirit of the PARS contract, which contemplates that ICE's access to PARS would not have implications for

Philadelphia residents" who "pose no threat to public safety."

"It is clear from your response," Pratt wrote, "that ICE's use of information in PARS regarding individuals arrested in the city likely results in enforcement operations that have adverse immigration consequences for otherwise law-abiding persons that ICE 'encounters' during its operations."

>> READ MORE: What is Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an agency now under fire?

Pratt also indicated in the letter that the city has no obligation to maintain the contract beyond its expiration, and he reiterated the concerns of some residents and immigration rights advocates.

"Without recounting the details of recent national and local events in this letter," he wrote, "it suffices to say that ICE's conduct has led to deep-seated fear and mistrust of ICE in Philadelphia's communities."

The PARS database, which has been shared with ICE since 2008, is managed by three city entities — the courts, the police, and the Office of the District Attorney — two of which would have to sign on in order to renew the contract.

District Attorney Larry Krasner has said he does not support the renewal of the contract, and Kenney has the final say when it comes to the police. The First Judicial District has not revealed its stance publicly.

The mayor has said he's weighing whether the termination of the contract would impact court proceedings related to the Philadelphia's "sanctuary city" case against the Trump administration.

Last month, a federal judge sided with Philadelphia officials in that case, ruling against the Trump administration, which attempted to withhold \$1.5 million of federal grant money because the city refused to share certain information beyond PARS with ICE. There's some concern that terminating the agreement with ICE could be used against the city if that decision is appealed.

City officials have faced pressure for years from local immigration rights organizations to terminate the PARS contract, though the situation intensified over the last two weeks while "Occupy ICE" protesters have camped out at City Hall. Ending the PARS agreement is among the group's demands. Last week, Kenney met with immigration advocates, including representatives from the encampment, to discuss the future of the PARS agreement.

On Wednesday morning, about two dozen protesters banged drums and chanted near the ICE office in Center City, two weeks after Philadelphia police raided and destroyed an encampment set up at the same location. They then marched to the new around-

the-clock demonstration site activists established at City Hall.

Activists chanted "Abolish ICE" and "Shut down Berks" during a protest at Eighth and Cherry Streets that blocked traffic and lasted for about 45 minutes before they marched past the ICE office and weaved their way through Chinatown on their way to City Hall. "Berks" is a reference to a federal family detention center in Berks County.

Some wore turquoise T-shirts that read, "Mayor Kenney End PARS."

Kingston Restaurant Chef, Said To Be In US Legally, Is Picked Up By ICE, Possibly Due To DWI Conviction 7 Years Ago

By Diane Pineiro

[Kingston \(NY\) Daily Freeman](#), July 19, 2018

KINGSTON, N.Y. — Juan Carlos Alonzo Vasquez's past might have come back to haunt him on Wednesday.

Vasquez had agreed to work an early shift at The Anchor restaurant and bar on Broadway in Midtown but he never made it to work, his boss said Thursday morning.

Brandy Walters said Vasquez, 29, a 10-year Kingston resident from Oaxaca, Mexico, who has worked at The Anchor as head grill chef for the past two years, was picked up by officers from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) sometime around 8:30 a.m. Wednesday.

Walters said Vasquez was allowed to call her about 11:45 a.m. "to let us know he would not be in to work and he didn't know when he would be back."

Vasquez, who Walters described as "absolutely the sweetest, nicest guy you've ever met," sounded nervous and scared, she said.

"His English is usually pretty good, and he was having a hard time [speaking clearly]," Walters said. "ICE had him. He didn't know why, and he didn't know where he was."

A search of the Freeman's online archives might explain Vasquez's detention.

On Jan. 18, 2011, Vasquez was arrested by Rosendale police and charged with the misdemeanors of drunken driving and aggravated drunken driving after a property-damage accident on Lucas Turnpike in the town. On Thursday, the Rosendale Town Court clerk said Vasquez accepted a plea deal and pleaded guilty on March 29, 2011, to the misdemeanor of driving with a blood-alcohol level exceeding the legal limit of 0.08 percent.

Since Donald Trump became president in January 2017, his administration has been enforcing existing

laws that allow for the deportation of legal immigrants convicted of misdemeanors.

Calls to ICE at the number on its website would not go through Thursday morning, and a reporter's email to ICE was not returned. According to the ICE locator site for detainees, Vasquez is being held in the Orange County Jail.

Walters said she faxed Vasquez's paperwork — copies of a green card indicating permanent residency status and a Social Security card — to local jails and ICE in hopes of proving he is in the United States legally.

"While he's worked for me, he's been paying taxes," she said.

Walters said she was unaware of Vasquez's DWI conviction.

"If he has anything, it has to be minor," she said Thursday. "... Nothing to harm anyone. ... You and I can make a mistake and it goes away eventually. We don't have to pay for it forever."

Another Anchor employee, bartender Christopher Livecchi of Kingston, said he's worked with Vasquez since 2015 and called him "the backbone of our kitchen operation."

"I'm struck speechless by the fact that this happened at all," Livecchi said. "... He doesn't deserve this. We want to bring him back. He's one of us. He's part of our family."

He said Walters is organizing a letter-writing campaign among employees and friends of Vasquez and is seeking legal representation for him.

Walters said she has asked for help from the office of U.S. Rep. John Faso, R-Kinderhook, and has "every reason to believe they're going to expedite it."

...

Vasquez is not the first Ulster County resident to face deportation this year based on a past criminal history.

In January, Leo Santos, former co-owner of the now-shuttered Just For You restaurant at 375 Broadway, left the United States and returned to his home country of Mexico voluntarily after being ordered to leave by June 20.

At the time, co-owner Ines Santos said Leo Santos had a U.S. work permit, which he renewed each year, and a Social Security number.

According to published reports, Leo Santos entered the United States illegally in 1999 and later married an American woman, then ran into trouble when he was told two drunken-driving convictions meant he couldn't get a green card.

He left his 13-year-old son behind.

In May, Joel Guerrero of New Paltz was released from 10 weeks in ICE custody. Guerrero, who came to

the United States legally 20 years ago, was detained by ICE until a federal judge issued a stay in his case, clearing the way for Immigration and Customs Enforcement to release him while his case continues to wind its way through courts.

Guerrero's difficulties began in 2004 when he was arrested in North Carolina for possession of marijuana. According to North Carolina court officials, he was charged for felony possession of marijuana with intent to sell and misdemeanor possession of drug paraphernalia. The felony charge ultimately was reduced to a misdemeanor, and Guerrero pleaded guilty to both misdemeanor charges.

As a result of that conviction, Guerrero was ordered to appear in immigration court on Jan. 6, 2011, but he was a no-show because he was in a rehab facility. After he failed to appear, his green card was revoked and a deportation order was issued.

Still, he was allowed to stay in the country, checking in with immigration officers every six months until he was locked up without warning in late February.

Guerrero's detention sparked an outcry in the community, and a number of groups, including the New Paltz Town Board, called for his release.

His case remains open.

Florida ICE Protesters Face Unlawful Assembly Charges

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

MIRAMAR, Fla. (AP) — At least 17 protesters face charges after blocking a roadway outside a South Florida office of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The Miramar Police Department said Thursday that the protesters face charges of unlawful assembly and obstructing a highway for the protest on Wednesday at a busy intersection in Miramar, Florida.

Authorities say the protesters set up tents and chairs in the road and used their bodies to stop traffic.

The police department says hundreds of vehicles had to be diverted during the protest.

Protesters all over the nation have marched outside ICE offices to object to the Trump administration's zero-tolerance immigration policy.

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Louisville Police Dismantle Occupy ICE

By Darcy Costello

[Louisville \(KY\) Courier-Journal](#), July 19, 2018

Occupy ICE Louisville protesters argue the city's crackdown on their 17-day-old encampment outside the

federal immigration building Thursday was “heavy-handed,” but police maintain it was necessary to bring the camp in line with laws.

Dozens of officers tore down tents, removed objects and set up bike racks as barricades in order to, officials said, bring the demonstration into compliance with state law and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Police had previously requested protesters create a 4-foot-wide path on the sidewalk.

Protesters at the encampment, dubbed Camp Compasión, were given a 15-minute warning at 6 a.m. Thursday. No one “moved to move anything,” so officers began collecting items and throwing away trash, Louisville police spokeswoman Jessie Halladay said.

“It was pretty calm, peaceful,” she said, adding that no incidents or arrests had taken place.

By 9 a.m., the camp was gone. Tents and tarps had been returned to owners or taken to the police’s property room. And items that were in the camp — a bouncy ball, packs of water bottles, umbrellas, grills, sleeping bags and foam pads — were packed up in cars and taken away from the former camp on Seventh Street near Broadway.

“Where compassion once thrived (now) is more border and fences,” Occupy ICE Louisville posted on Twitter.

In a statement issued later in the day, the group accused Mayor Greg Fischer and police officials of not caring about the treatment of the immigrant community. Police, they say, “raided” the camp and took their property as protesters slept.

“They pretend to fret about ADA regulations and ‘public safety,’ while Camp Compasión stood peacefully as a model of radical love, hospitality, and resistance for all who built community with us,” it said.

A statement from police Chief Steve Conrad said the department had been patient in allowing protesters to exercise their right to free speech, but that it must be balanced with public safety, an apparent reference to the need for sidewalks.

“While we have provided options and opportunities, they have not come into compliance, so we had to take action and keep a path on the sidewalk,” Conrad wrote.

On Twitter, Mayor Greg Fischer wrote that protesters are free to continue exercising their First Amendment rights “as long as they remain legally compliant.”

The protesters found fault with flyers distributed to the camp with instructions on how to reclaim property taken by the police. In it, the department references “seized property considered abandoned.”

“If the property was abandoned, why was it necessary for police to come decked out in riot gear with an arrest wagon? ... Abandoned items can not fight back, and there were less than 20 sleeping campers onsite when the raid began,” the Occupy ICE statement said.

There were dozens of officers on Seventh Street on Thursday morning. A SWAT team was also present across the street but never entered the stretch of Seventh between Broadway and Magazine Street, which was temporarily blocked with caution tape.

The protesters’ statement also questions why the encampment wasn’t given an eviction notice if they were going to be forced to leave.

Two weekends in a row, a counterprotest led by the Three Percenters, a self-described “patriot” militia group, led police to close down several streets around the Occupy ICE encampment. “Safe zones” were created by police to keep the sides separated.

The first counterprotest drew hundreds to the anti-ICE side. But this past weekend, Occupy ICE Louisville largely didn’t engage with the counterprotesters, who told the media they planned to be back every weekend that the demonstration outside of the federal building continued.

Police didn’t cite that potential as part of the reason for the crackdown. They say they gave protesters verbal and written warnings about creating a path, but a walkway was not maintained.

They also say protesters began to infringe on parking spaces and there were some “public health concerns” over how the camp was handling human waste. During the 17 days protesters have been at the encampment there were “several” calls for service in the area, the release said.

Protesters don’t specify in their statement how or if the demonstration will continue. But they say that the city and police’s “heavy-handed tactics” only strengthened their resolve.

“We will be as defiant as ever,” the Occupy ICE statement said. “Our mission is still to #AbolishICE in order to #FreeOurFuture; we will not falter.”

Darcy Costello: 502-582-4834; dcostello@courier-journal.com; Twitter: @dctello. Support strong local journalism by subscribing today: www.courier-journal.com/darcyc.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

Former Baggage Handler Sentenced In Atlanta Airport Gun Smuggling Case

By Kelly Yamanouchi

[Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), July 19, 2018

A former Delta Air Lines baggage handler was sentenced Thursday to 30 months in prison for allegedly smuggling guns onto passenger planes at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

According to U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia Byung J. "BJay" Pak, 34-year-old Eugene Harvey of College Park as a Delta baggage handler used his security badge to smuggle guns to restricted areas at the Atlanta airport in 2014.

At food courts or in men's restrooms on airport concourses, Harvey allegedly transferred the firearms to a former Delta employee, who hid the guns in carry-on bags and took them onto flights from Atlanta to New York. The guns were then illegally sold in New York, according to the U.S. Attorney's office.

"Harvey breached airport security at one of the nation's busiest airports in the world, when he smuggled illegal weapons – some of which were loaded – onto passenger planes," Pak said in a written statement.

Harvey trafficked a total of 135 firearms between Georgia and New York, according to the U.S. Attorney's office. There were 18 guns in the last shipment on Dec. 10, 2014, including seven that were loaded. Harvey was arrested on federal charges 10 days later.

An FBI agent said for the last shipment, Harvey entered the airport through an employee parking lot. At the time, airline employees did not all have to pass through Transportation Security Administration checkpoints to get to flights. Harvey was able to use his security badge to access restricted areas.

Delta worked with law enforcement to identify Harvey and fired him.

"Mr. Harvey was not concerned with the safety of airline passengers or with the fact that his actions promoted violence on the streets of New York City," said Arthur Peralta, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives special agent in charge, in a written statement.

In response to the gun-smuggling revelations, Hartsfield-Jackson instituted new requirements for airport workers to go through security screening.

Harvey was recently convicted and sentenced in New York for state firearms violations, and the 30-month prison sentence is to be served concurrent with his current five-year sentence, followed by three years of supervised release.

Banks Get Tools To Spot Human Traffickers Moving Illicit Profits

By Ellen Wulforst

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

FL Gun Dealer Who Smuggled AK-47s To Brazil Gets 13 Years

By Jay Weaver

[Miami Herald](#), July 19, 2018

A gun dealer who pocketed millions from selling weapons to criminals in his native Brazil was sentenced to about 13 years in prison on Thursday for smuggling more than 1,000 firearms — including assault-style rifles hidden in water heaters shipped from Miami to Rio de Janeiro.

Frederik Barbieri, 47, who was arrested with a cache of weapons at his Florida home, admitted in Miami federal court that he exported high-powered rifles with obliterated serial numbers to Brazil, where guns are sold on the black market to street gangs and drug traffickers in the favelas, or slums, of urban areas. Barbieri appeared on the feds' radar after one of his loads was confiscated last year at Rio de Janeiro's airport.

Barbieri, who was born in Brazil and became a naturalized U.S. citizen, faced a maximum of 25 years in prison on two charges to which he pleaded guilty in May: conspiracy to smuggle weapons to a foreign country and violations of firearm export licensing laws.

U.S. District Judge Federico Moreno gave him a slight break under the sentencing guidelines for his conviction because Barbieri has assisted federal and Brazilian authorities in the massive gun-smuggling investigation. Barbieri's defense attorney said he was helping Brazilian investigators target a high-ranking police officer in the South American country who extorted about \$1 million from him. In fact, a Brazilian investigator sat next to U.S. agents in the courtroom during Barbieri's sentencing. SIGN UP

"I made about \$3 million, but I didn't get to keep it all," Barbieri told the judge, adding he had huge expenses, including paying off the Brazilian police officer.

Barbieri, though charged alone with illegally exporting weaponry to violent gangs and narco-traffickers in Brazil, collaborated with others in his illicit gun-distribution network, said a federal prosecutor, who pushed for a sentence in the 20-year range. Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian Shack said Barbieri was a major firearms dealer who fueled the "war zone" between street gangs and Brazilian police in the favelas. "This is on a larger scale than Brazil has ever seen," Shack said, describing the death toll.

Barbieri's defense attorney, Leonard Fenn, argued that Barbieri deserved a sentence in the 10-year range because he has been supplying information "at great personal risk" not only on others in his gun-smuggling network but also on the Brazilian law enforcement officer who shook him down for a piece of his weapons deals.

"He essentially blackmailed the defendant," Fenn said, pointing out that the Brazilian officer even visited Barbieri's home in Port St. Lucie during the summer of 2017.

Fenn said his client was threatened by the officer after one of Barbieri's shipments was intercepted at Rio de Janeiro's airport by Brazilian authorities in May 2017. They found 30 AR-15 and AK-47 rifles, along with firearm magazines, all hidden in four 38-gallon Rheem water heaters.

The water heaters were hollowed out and loaded with firearms whose serial numbers were obliterated, according to the prosecutor. Shack said that on the day that Brazilian authorities intercepted his shipment, Barbieri called the freight forwarder to destroy the paperwork for his illegal shipment.

Federal agents said they obtained documents from the freight forwarder showing a history of Barbieri's suspicious shipments to Rio de Janeiro. Barbieri had also shipped an additional 120 Rheem water heaters, as well as 520 electric motors and 15 air-conditioning units, over the previous five years. Agents suspected these items were used to conceal Barbieri's illegal shipments of firearms and ammunition dating back to 2013.

Shack said that because it is illegal for Brazilians to possess firearms, assault-style rifles have a black market value of \$15,000 to \$20,000. In the United States, the retail cost of an AR-15 or AK-47 rifle runs between \$700 and \$1,000 each.

When agents with the Department of Homeland Security Investigations searched Barbieri's warehouse in Vero Beach in February, they found 52 assault-type rifles, almost all of which had obliterated serial numbers and were wrapped for shipment. In addition, agents said they found dozens of high-capacity firearm magazines, more than 2,000 rounds of ammunition and packaging materials.

The following day, Barbieri was arrested at his home in Port St. Lucie, where he lived with his wife and daughter.

Fatal SUV Crash Driver Among 5 Charged In Smuggling Scheme

By Ryan Tarinelli

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

DALLAS (AP) – A 20-year-old man indicted in an alleged immigrant smuggling scheme was under federal supervision when he led authorities in Texas on a high-speed chase and crashed an SUV, killing five of the 14 people inside, according to court records.

Federal prosecutors said the driver, Jorge Luis Monsivais Jr., and four others were indicted Wednesday by a federal grand jury in Del Rio, Texas, for their roles in the alleged smuggling scheme. All five face multiple federal counts, including conspiracy to harbor illegal immigrants.

Authorities say Monsivais crashed a Chevrolet Suburban as he entered Big Wells, a town about 100 miles southwest of San Antonio. Five immigrants in the U.S. illegally died from the June 17 crash.

At the time, Monsivais was on supervised release for a federal charge. Court documents show Monsivais was arrested "transporting" three immigrants to San Antonio for an average price of \$1,500 per person. He had been sentenced to more than a year in prison and three years of supervised release.

A U.S. probation officer wrote in court documents that Monsivais had received his General Equivalency Diploma, completed substance abuse treatment and participated in a mental health assessment. But, the probation officer also wrote that his "reckless behavior" and "blatant disregard for the safety of humans" show he is not willing to comply with the conditions.

The crash happened after Border Patrol agents became suspicious of three vehicles traveling in a convoy between El Indio and Carrizo Springs, Texas. Two of the three vehicles fled when agents tried to make "immigration inspections."

The Suburban driven by Monsivais crashed. The other vehicle, driven by a 17-year-old boy, also fled from authorities but eventually pulled over. An affidavit said the teenager had been hired by Marcial Gomez-Santana, the driver of the vehicle that did not take off when agents approached.

Gomez-Santana is of the five defendants indicted Wednesday. Two others charged – Rudy Gomez of Hockley, Texas; and Johana Gomez of Houston – are his children.

Witnesses said Gomez-Santana and his son Rudy would call the family members of the immigrants to collect additional smuggling fees, according to court records. Witnesses also reported that Mariela Reyna, another indicted defendant, came to cook for the immigrants at a stash house at least two times.

Johana Gomez told authorities that one of the vehicles was registered to her boyfriend and she went to Eagle Pass to sell it. According to the affidavit, she later

said her father “needed to use the vehicle for something.”

The teenager driving the 2008 Tahoe said Johana Gomez “was present when he discussed his role” in the smuggling venture, according to the court records.

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SECRET SERVICE

Crowdfunding Campaign For Family Of Fallen Secret Service Agent Exceeds Goal

By Emily Birnbaum

[The Hill](#), July 19, 2018

A crowdsourcing campaign for the family of the Secret Service officer who passed away on Tuesday has far exceeded its initial goal.

The GoFundMe page, which was set up by a former co-worker of Secret Service agent Nole Remagen, originally set its goal at \$150,000. As of Thursday, the campaign had raised more than \$212,000 and the goal was extended to \$250,000.

Remagen suffered a stroke while traveling with President Trump in Scotland on Monday. Remagen died in a hospital on Tuesday and the Secret Service revealed his identity the following day.

All of the proceeds from the fundraising campaign will go to Remagen's wife and two children, according to the GoFundMe page.

“I have set up and organized this campaign with the hope the funds collected through this platform help to ease the burden that surely is ahead for Nole's wife, two young children and the entire Remagen family,” the campaign's creator David Cruea wrote.

Remagen was a 19-year veteran of the Secret Service, according to an agency statement released after his death. He spent five years in the Marine Corps before joining the Secret Service, according to a statement from the White House.

“Our prayers are with Special Agent Remagen's loved ones, including his wife and two young children,” President Trump said in a statement Wednesday. “We grieve with them and with his Secret Service colleagues, who have lost a friend and a brother.”

“Melania and I are deeply grateful for his lifetime of devotion, and today, we pause to honor his life and 24 years of service to our Nation,” Trump continued.

The Secret Service's statement noted Remagen “exemplified the core values of the Secret Service – justice, duty, courage, honesty and loyalty.”

Portland Men Arrested In Walmart Lot Had Fentanyl, Weapon, Counterfeit Money, Police Say

By Dennis Hoey

[Portland \(ME\) Press Herald](#), July 19, 2018

Three Portland men were arrested in the Scarborough Walmart parking lot Wednesday after a police officer found them in possession of a stolen, loaded weapon, a stolen motor vehicle, fentanyl powder, a large amount of counterfeit money, and an embosser machine used to manufacture counterfeit credit cards.

They were arrested around 1:45 p.m. after a Scarborough Police Department special enforcement officer stopped the vehicle. A check of the vehicle's registration showed it had been stolen in North Carolina.

The officer “initiated a high-risk traffic stop while waiting for backup officers,” Scarborough police said Thursday in a post on the department's Facebook page.

Arrested were: 19-year-old Ibekendu Ellenton-Ogugua Mokeme, 23-year-old Jeffrey Devon Silvia and 22-year-old Adrian Candelaria. Each faces a charge of theft by unauthorized use of property or motor vehicle theft, as well as violation of bail conditions.

Mokeme was charged separately with aggravated forgery while Silvia was charged with theft by receiving stolen property – the .22-caliber handgun.

Scarborough police said Silvia was carrying the pistol in his pocket and was also carrying 11.7 grams of fentanyl powder.

Mokeme had 30 counterfeit \$100 bills in his pocket. The embosser machine was found in the trunk of the vehicle.

From left, Adrian Candelaria, Jeffrey Devon Silvia and Ibekendu Ellenton-Ogugua Mokeme. Photos courtesy of Scarborough Police Department

“The Secret Service is now assisting with this case and additional federal charges are likely forthcoming,” Scarborough police said in the news release.

The Secret Service and Windham police are also investigating a Windham business and its associates in connection with a counterfeiting scheme that may have produced tens of thousands of dollars in fake bills used to buy heroin and cocaine. They searched Ron's Auto Sales and an apartment in Windham in April.

Dennis Hoey can be contacted at 791-6365 or at:

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Criminal Investigation Underway In Deadly Substation Fire

By Anna Spoerre

[Oregonian](#), July 19, 2018

WASCO — A criminal investigation is underway in the Substation fire, which has killed one person and burned more than 50,000 acres in north central Oregon.

At a news conference Thursday afternoon, Wasco County Sheriff Lane Magill referred to a criminal investigation but declined to answer questions about the inquiry because he didn't want to jeopardize the investigation.

The agency has also referred to the blaze as "incendiary in nature" but hasn't offered more details about the cause, which Magill said remains undetermined.

Despite wind speeds up to 35 and 40 mph Thursday, firefighters were able to hold the fire at 50,000 acres, state fire marshal spokesman Stefan Myers said during the news conference. He said there was some significant growth at the south end of the blaze.

As of Thursday afternoon, 217 firefighters from 73 agencies across the state were tending to what is now the No. 1 fire in the country, Myers said.

The man who died, 64-year-old John Ruby, was found in a burned tractor about 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, the Wasco County Sheriff's Office said. It appears the longtime Wasco County resident was trying to protect his neighbor's property by making a fire line, according to the agency.

"Our hearts go out to the families impacted by this death," Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said.

Brown, a day after declaring a statewide fire emergency, said she anticipates "a very difficult fire season" — one that has hit the state nearly a month earlier than usual.

She held a morning news conference in Salem and addressed the destruction of the Substation fire, which is burning southeast of The Dalles, as well as conditions statewide.

Southern Oregon has 200 fires burning, primarily in Jackson and Josephine counties, after lightning strikes over the weekend, she said.

Brown said the Substation fire will have a significant effect on Oregon's wheat farmers and agriculture industry.

"This is definitely our wheat basket, and it's going to impact Oregon, it's going to impact the world," she said.

Brown invoked the Emergency Conflagration Act for the Substation fire early Wednesday morning, allowing more in- and out-of-state resources to be funneled into the fire response.

Hours later, she declared a statewide wildfire emergency, activating a standing agreement with the Oregon National Guard that makes helicopters and

troops available to fight fires at the request of the Oregon Department of Forestry.

The fire has caused widespread evacuation orders. More than 900 homes have been issued level 2 (be set) and 3 (go now) notices.

Moro and Grass Valley remained under level 3 evacuation orders Thursday evening, and Wasco and Kent remained at level 2. Parts of the Deschutes River also remain closed.

A stretch of highway parallel to Interstate 84 from approximately Celilo Village to Biggs Junction remained closed late Thursday afternoon, as well. The Oregon Department of Transportation also warned motorists that no fuel is available north of Madras on U.S. 97 and no fuel or services are available in Biggs.

Destroyed structures could be seen on half a dozen properties in the area near 15 Mile Creek and the burned-down Charles E. Emerson farmhouse Wednesday afternoon. There's still no official word on the number of structures affected.

As the sun began to set Thursday, the next 12-hour-long firefighter shift began.

Frank Clifton, 32, a firefighter with the Albany Fire Department, spent Wednesday night into Thursday morning fighting a slice of fire that crept up from the base of the Deschutes. He and others were there to protect a home.

With the help of local farmers and a little bit of divine intervention, Clifton said, he and his crew were able to protect a group of radio towers on top of a ridgeline despite fire approaching on two fronts.

"It's a lot coming in and building a small city of firefighters to do this," Clifton said, adding that a lot of the success can be attributed to help from local ranchers and farmers fighting the fire on the frontlines alongside them.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has authorized federal funds to help fight the fire because it threatened "a major disaster," the agency said in a news release. The threats include about 600 homes, 400 of which are primary residences. The fire also threatened major Oregon and California transmission lines, numerous substations, U.S. 97, the Deschutes River National Scenic Waterway and recreational areas, FEMA said.

"We're fully engaged from southwest Oregon up to northeast Oregon," said Doug Grafe, fire protection chief with the Oregon Department of Forestry. He said air quality issues like those experienced last summer are expected for the state.

Myers, the state fire marshal spokesman, also warned of heavy smoke that was causing poor visibility in some spots. He also said the smoke levels were at a

moderate to unhealthy range and cautioned those in the area to drive with headlights on.

The National Weather Service calls for an overnight low of about 52 degrees, a west wind of 18 to 24 mph and gusts as high as 34 mph in Wasco. The agency predicts a high near 84, west wind of 14 to 17 mph and gusts as high as 24 mph Friday.

Several agencies are investigating the fire, according to the Wasco County Sheriff's Office. The agency urged anyone who has information to call 800-452-7888.

– Jim Ryan and Shane Dixon Kavanaugh of the Oregonian/OregonLive contributed to this report.

Substation Fire No. 1 Priority In The Nation, Firefighters Hold It To 50,000 Acres

[KOMO-TV Seattle](#), July 19, 2018

MORO, Ore. —

High winds Thursday made the jobs of firefighters that more difficult as they battled to contain the three-day-old Substation Fire, which is now considered the nation's No. 1 wildfire priority.

But that means more resources are arriving to help the more than 200 firefighters already working the lines of the 50,000-acre fire that has killed one person, destroyed structures and burned through crops, grass and forestland.

Seventy-three fire agencies across the state of Oregon are now battling the blaze.

But even with the 35 mph to 40 mph winds that pushed the fire to grow at the north and south ends of the fire, Stefan Myers, with the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office, said fire crews kept the fire at 50,000 acres.

About 900 homes are still under Level 2 (Get Set) or Level 3 (Leave Now) evacuation orders. As of Thursday afternoon, Moro and Grass Valley were in Level 3 evacuation zones. Biggs Junction, Wasco and Kent were under Level 2 evacuation orders.

Various aircraft continued to fight the fire from above, including helicopters and air tankers.

"The benefit of this diverse air support is that they can provide heavy drops of the canyons and the smaller aircraft can provide more precision strikes in the canyon," said Myers.

First the first time, bulldozers joined in the battle to help contain the fire Thursday, officials said.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation. Wasco County Sheriff Lane McGill said he couldn't divulge any information about the criminal investigation for fear of compromising it. But the sheriff's office said it was "incendiary in nature." State police have set up a tip

line for anyone who knows anything about how the fire started. That number is 800-452-7888.

The sheriff's office Thursday also identified the man who died in the fire. John Ruby, 64, a longtime resident of Wasco County, was working to protect his neighbor's property with a tractor when he succumbed to the fire.

Earlier in the day, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown also held a news conference. She said, although the Substation Fire is growing quickly, it's important to remember there are other fires burning across the state. Many of them were caused by lightning this weekend.

Brown said fire season is starting three to four weeks earlier than it did last year.

The U.S. Air Force and National Guard are assisting firefighters' efforts to contain the Substation Fire.

After Brown declared a state of emergency Wednesday, the Oregon State Fire Marshal began speaking to agencies in California and Washington to seek assistance.

The Substation Fire started southeast of The Dalles Tuesday afternoon.

Residents displaced by the fire can find shelter at The Dalles Middle School at 1100 E. 12th Street in The Dalles. It has been set up by the Red Cross.

The Mid-Columbia Center for Living has a hotline available for anyone who needs someone to talk with. That number is 1-888-877-9147.

Highways 97, 30 and 206 were shut down for a short time Thursday. The highway closures have been intermittent. Driver's can check TripCheck for the latest road information. The Oregon Department of Transportation said there is no fuel available on Highway 97 north of Madras.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has authorized federal funds to help with the firefighting costs. The agency determined enough homes were at risk. It also considered threats to major transmission lines that supply power to Oregon and California.

Judge Orders Extension Of Aid For Puerto Rico Storm Evacuees

By Alex Dobuzinskis

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

COAST GUARD

Hawaii Officials Didn't Know Coast Guard Let Tour Boats Get Closer To Lava

By Chris Boyette

[CNN International](#), July 19, 2018

Officials on Hawaii's Big Island said they were not aware and not asked for input when the US Coast Guard granted certain vessels – namely lava tour boats – special permission to get closer to active lava flows in the ocean.

"We would have liked to have known so we could give some input," said Wil Okabe, managing director of Hawaii County on Wednesday.

"The lava in the ocean is very unpredictable. If that particular tour boat had gone several feet to the right, that explosion would have gone into the hull instead of the roof," Okabe said. "It's a very unpredictable situation. It's very dangerous."

A flying hunk of lava hit a tour boat

and injured 23 people, who were aboard a tour boat named Hot Shot on Monday morning in Kapoho Bay, the Hawaii County Fire Department said.

The so-called lava bomb punctured the roof of the boat, as witnesses said that the people on board were getting pelted and screaming.

The Coast Guard did not immediately respond to CNN's requests for comment.

After Monday's incident, the US Coast Guard extended the required safety zone surrounding active lava flows in Hawaii.

Boats in Hawaii were already required to be at least 300 meters, or nearly 1,000 feet, away from lava flows at all times, the Coast Guard said. But certain research and commercial vessels – including Hot Shot – had special permission to make a closer approach. In the wake of the lava bomb injuries, the Coast Guard said all boats must adhere to the 300-meter rule.

Sara Muir, a Coast Guard spokesperson, said Tuesday that any time a boat gets near an active volcano, you are "accepting a higher level of risk." Licensed mariners must rely on good judgment, she said.

Officials are interviewing the crew and passengers as part of an investigation into what happened, Muir said.

How it's affecting tourism

Okabe says the volcano has affected tourism on the Big Island.

The latest numbers from the Hawaii Tourism Authority show increases in the amount of airline tickets purchased for Hawaii, hotel rates and occupancy as well

as visitor spending statewide, but the data is only available through May.

Kilauea erupted on May 3, and has since continued to be active.

"Throughout the world, the news spread it was unsafe to come to the island and that's not true. When people see that devastation, they think it's the whole island, but it's not. It's 2% of the island," Okabe said.

"The tourism industry here on the Big Island and throughout the state are trying to send the message that Hawaii is a safe place."

For the past month, Hawaii County officials have been looking for a site to establish safe lava viewing areas on land.

"I'm sure people around the world will want to see this lava flow. It's unlike anything most have ever seen," Okabe said.

Hawaii County Mayor Harry Kim has instructed staff to look for a safe viewing site, he said.

"But the most important thing is safety – to mitigate hazard and risk," Okabe said.

County officials hope to choose the land-based lava viewing site in the next couple weeks.

"This safe viewing will be a tremendous boon to tourism on the island," said Okabe. "People want that excitement. It's an exciting thing to view."

Such a viewing site would have to be approved for safety measures, which has to be done by the state's Department of Health and the US Geological Survey, CNN affiliate KHON reported.

Establishing a lava viewing area could help businesses in the area that have been hard hit over the last two months.

"Every business, I think in the area from Volcano down to Pahoa area, has lost business from 20% to 80%," Kim told the station. "And anything can help. Naturally, that is our job, so we're gonna try to keep looking for things. Hopefully, things will stabilize better."

CNN's Eric Levenson and Sara Weisfeldt contributed to this report.

Hawaii Officials Didn't Know Coast Guard Let Tour Boats Get Closer To Lava

By Chris Boyette

[CNN](#), July 19, 2018

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How it's affecting tourism

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It's been over two months since Hawaii's Kilauea volcano started erupting again, and the lava's still flowing

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CNN's Eric Levenson and Sara Weisfeldt contributed to this report.

Children Are Among 11 People Killed When A Duck Boat Capsized In Missouri

By Faith Karimi And Joe Sutton

[CNN](#), July 19, 2018

A duck boat capsized and sunk during a severe thunderstorm in Missouri, killing at least 11 people, some of them children, authorities said.

Stone County Sheriff Doug Rader said at least five people are unaccounted for and seven others were injured in Thursday night's incident on Table Rock Lake near Branson.

The boat was carrying 31 people, he said, and dive teams from various agencies are scouring the waters for potential victims.

"It's going to be a challenging night," Rader said. "I believe it was caused by weather, yes."

Video shot by a man in a nearby boat showed two duck boats rocking and tilting to the side as the lake's ripples turned into massive waves. "Oh my God, those

poor people, oh no!" someone says in the background as the water appears to swallow the bobbing boats.

An off-duty deputy working security helped rescue people, Rader said, without providing details.

Ripley Entertainment, the parent company of Ride the Ducks Branson, said it recently acquired the vessel involved in the incident. It said there were other boats on the lake that returned to dock safely.

The amphibious boat travels on both land and water, and is popular among tourists in major cities. The boats' history dates back to World War II, when such boats were a common sight due to their versatility.

The investigation into the boat's sinking will be conducted by the Coast Guard, said Sgt. Jason Pace of the Missouri State Highway Patrol, which is assisting. A team from the National Transportation Safety Board will travel to the scene Friday morning.

Branson was under a severe thunderstorm warning issued shortly before 6:30 p.m. local time, about half an hour before the boat capsized.

There were numerous reports of damage throughout the county, including trees down and structural damage, said CNN meteorologist Taylor Ward. The highest wind gust reported in the area was 63 mph.

Gov. Mike Parson asked for prayers for first responders and those involved in the incident.

Branson is in southwest Missouri, about 200 miles from Kansas City.

CNN's Deanna Hackney, Steve Almasy and Sheena Jones contributed to this report.

CYBER NEWS

Three Top FBI Cybersecurity Officials To Retire

Departures come as U.S. faces threat of cyberattacks

By Dustin Volz And Shelby Holliday

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Top FBI Cyber Officials Set To Retire

By David Shortell And Eli Watkins

[CNN](#), July 19, 2018

(CNN)The FBI's top two cybersecurity officials are planning to leave the bureau, the FBI confirmed Thursday.

David Resch, the executive assistant director in charge of the FBI's Criminal, Cyber, Response and Services Branch, is retiring after more than two decades

of service, as is Scott Smith, who worked under him as the head of the Cyber Division.

The moves are not atypical for FBI agents who have hit the work milestones that the men recently did, making them eligible to receive retirement benefits. But they come as threats in the cyber world, like Russia's election interference and online foreign influence campaigns, have reached a point of alarm.

In a statement provided by the FBI, Resch expressed a continued appreciation for the bureau and confidence in its director, Christopher Wray.

"As I retire after 28 years of government service to transition into the private sector, I have full confidence that under Director Wray's steadfast leadership, the Bureau will remain the FBI the American people have depended on for 110 years," Resch said.

The bureau also confirmed the upcoming retirement of a third top official, Executive Assistant Director Carl Ghattas, who heads the National Security Branch.

Over a 20-year career, Ghattas worked several of the bureau's most high-profile counterterrorism cases.

The Wall Street Journal first reported the news of the retirements.

Resch and Ghattas had been appointed to their senior positions earlier this year. In their roles – overseeing all of the bureau's global criminal and cyber investigations, and national security operations and intelligence efforts, respectively – both men would have been on the front lines of the US fight against Russian hacking.

In a speech Thursday night, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein described Russian efforts in the 2016 election as just "one tree in a growing forest" of malign cyber activity.

"Russian intelligence officers did not stumble onto the ideas of hacking American computers and posting misleading messages because they had a free afternoon," he added. "It is what they do every day."

An FBI official said Thursday that the retirements were not related to the wider climate around the bureau, and pointed to a hiring boom in the late 1990s that has led to a recent rise in senior agent retirements.

3 Top FBI Cybersecurity Officials Are Reportedly Retiring

By Joe Tacopino

[New York Post](#), July 19, 2018

Three cybersecurity officials are reportedly leaving their posts at the FBI amid concerns about cyber attacks from abroad and relentless disagreements with President Trump.

The three officials join others who have left government service in recent months as cyber intrusions become a major point of concern in advance of the midterm elections, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The paper named the officials as: Scott Smith, assistant FBI director who runs the Bureau's cyber division; David Resch, executive assistant director of the FBI's criminal, cyber, response and services branch; and Carl Ghattas, executive assistant director of the FBI's national security branch.

Smith's deputy, Howard Marshall, also left in recent weeks. Jeffrey Tricoli, who oversaw a task force addressing Russian attempts to meddle in US elections, left last month, the paper said.

The Journal cited senior US intelligence officials' warnings that the US is facing unprecedented cyber threats, including from Russia.

The FBI confirmed the departures to the paper and provided a statement from Resch.

"As I retire after 28 years of government service to transition into the private sector, I have full confidence that under Director [Chris] Wray's steadfast leadership, the Bureau will remain the FBI the American people have depended on for 110 years," the statement read.

Microsoft Executive Says Three 2018 Campaigns Have Been Targeted By Phishing Attacks

By Mike Memoli

[NBC News](#), July 19, 2018

ASPEN, Colo. — The campaigns of three candidates in the midterm elections were targeted in a phishing attack similar to the ones targeting the Clinton campaign in 2016, a top Microsoft executive said Thursday.

Microsoft could not identify the campaigns targeted and said no individuals were infected by the attack. The tactics were similar to those outlined in the indictment from special counsel Robert Mueller against Russian GRU operatives.

"They were all people who, because of their positions, might have been interesting targets from an espionage standpoint as well as an election disruption standpoint," Tom Burt, Microsoft's corporate vice president for customer security and trust, said during a panel discussion at the Aspen Security Forum focused on election security issues.

The attempted hackers registered fake Microsoft web domains to serve as a landing page for phishing attacks. Similar tactics were used in 2016 during the Republican and Democratic conventions, though the

company did not identify them as being orchestrated by the Russian government, Burt said.

Microsoft has made it a priority to identify such phishing attempts and used a novel legal strategy to prevent them from being successful, quickly seeking court orders to transfer the fake domains to what Burt called a "Microsoft-controlled sinkhole." He said Microsoft has been working with other large technology firms to share intelligence about such threats.

In the same panel, Assistant Homeland Security Secretary Jeanette Manfra, whose portfolio includes election security issues, said that while there has been a "concerning increase" in attempts by foreign states to infiltrate critical U.S. infrastructure, there were no indications that it included elections infrastructure.

"While we see Russians continuing to attempt to influence and undermine our democracy, we're not seeing the targeting of the actual state and local elections systems that we saw in 2016 right now," Manfra said.

Microsoft Says It Stopped Cyberattacks On Three 2018 Candidates

By Alyza Sebenius

[Bloomberg News](#), July 19, 2018

Microsoft Corp. said it identified and stopped attempts to launch cyberattacks on three 2018 congressional candidates using a phony version of its website.

The targets, who it didn't identify, were "all people who because of their positions might have been interesting from an espionage standpoint, as well as an election disruption standpoint," Tom Burt, Microsoft's corporate vice president for customer security and trust, said at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado on Thursday.

Burt described the attacks after President Donald Trump first cast doubt on the U.S. intelligence finding that Russia interfered in the 2016 election and then backed the assessment. Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats reaffirmed the consensus conclusion of U.S. spy agencies that Russia meddled in the presidential election and said Vladimir Putin's government is engaged in "ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy."

Burt said the attackers tried to use a phony Microsoft web page to make "phishing" attacks on the candidates. Working with the government, Burt said the company removed the internet domain and prevented the attacks from succeeding.

He said that Microsoft saw the same tactic attempted during the 2016 Democratic Convention in Philadelphia, at which the company provided protection.

Burt identified the group behind the 2016 attempt as APT28, a hacking group in Russia, which U.S. intelligence officials consider to be run by the G.R.U., Russia's military intelligence agency. He said that, in 2016, Microsoft took down a total of 90 domains run by APT28.

A Facebook Inc. executive on the same panel at the Aspen conference said that in April, the company removed a few hundred pages on the service controlled by the St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency, which has been indicted by Special Counsel Robert Mueller for an alleged social media campaign aimed at interfering in the 2016 election.

Monika Bickert, Facebook's head of product policy and counterterrorism, said the accounts were spreading Russian language advertisements in Russian-speaking countries.

Microsoft Reveals First Known Midterm Campaign Hacking Attempts

By Eric Geller

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

Microsoft detected and helped block hacking attempts against three congressional candidates this year, a company executive said Thursday, marking the first known example of cyber interference in the midterm elections.

"Earlier this year, we did discover that a fake Microsoft domain had been established as the landing page for phishing attacks," said Tom Burt, Microsoft's vice president for security and trust, at the Aspen Security Forum. "And we saw metadata that suggested those phishing attacks were being directed at three candidates who are all standing for election in the midterm elections."

Burt declined to name the targets but said they were "people who, because of their positions, might have been interesting targets from an espionage standpoint as well as an election disruption standpoint."

Microsoft took down the fake domain and worked with the federal government to block the phishing messages. Burt said that none of the targeted campaign staffers were infected.

Burt did not specify whether the hacking attempts originated from Russia.

Threat intelligence researchers at Microsoft and elsewhere are "not seeing the same level of activity by the Russian activity groups leading into the midterm

elections that we could see when we look back at the 2016 elections," Burt said.

For example, he said, Russian hackers are not targeting think tanks and academic experts like they did during the 2016 campaign.

Republicans Block Bid To Extend Election Security Grants

By Matthew Daly

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Republican-controlled House on Thursday eliminated new funding for states to strengthen election security, drawing protests from Democrats who said Republicans are not doing enough to prevent Russian meddling.

"The Russians attacked our democracy. They will be back, and we are not ready," said Rep. Mike Quigley, D-Ill. "The president is unwilling to meet this challenge, but we must be willing to meet the challenge."

Quigley and other Democrats blasted President Donald Trump for failing to stand up to Russian President Vladimir Putin at this week's summit in Helsinki and said Republicans were not taking threats against the integrity of U.S. elections seriously enough. Democratic lawmakers erupted into chants of "USA! USA!" during the debate, which came as Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said she has not seen evidence that Moscow had tried to help elect Trump.

"I haven't seen any evidence that the attempts to interfere in our election infrastructure was to favor a particular political party," Nielsen said Thursday at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado, adding that Russia is attempting to "cause chaos on both sides."

Trump has made shifting statements on whether he agrees with the findings of U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia interfered in the 2016 election. When asked Wednesday if Russia is still targeting the United States and its midterm elections, Trump responded "no," but White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders later said Trump was saying "no" to answering more questions.

Quigley's election security amendment would have extended funding for a state grant program overseen by the federal Election Assistance Commission. Congress approved \$380 million in the current budget for the program, which is intended to help states strengthen election systems from hacking and other cyberattacks.

Democrats want to approve a similar amount through 2019, but Republicans say money from the current program is still available to states and new spending is not needed.

House Rules Committee Chairman Pete Sessions, R-Texas, said Congress has already spent more than \$3.5 billion on election security since the contested 2000 election. States still have money left from the current \$380 million appropriation, and lawmakers have not been made aware of any new requests for more money as the November midterm elections approach, he said.

Sessions called the Democrats' argument a "shrewd political shenanigan that has no merit to it."

The amendment was defeated, 182-232, as the House debated a broader spending bill.

Rep. Lloyd Doggett, D-Texas, said Republicans' refusal to spend more money on election security "represents nothing less than unilateral disarmament" against Russia, citing the U.S. intelligence community's finding that Russia intervened in the 2016 election and charges brought by the Justice Department against Russian officials for hacking Democratic groups.

Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the No. 2 Democrat, depicted the vote on election security grants as a defense of U.S. democracy, citing a comment by National Intelligence Director Dan Coats that warning lights about cyber threats to the U.S. are "blinking red" in a manner similar to those before the 9/11 attacks.

"The flashing red light calls us to action!" Hoyer thundered. "Surely we can rise above pandering to party and Putin to act on behalf of our freedom and our security." Democrats broke out in chants of "USA! USA!" as Hoyer spoke.

The House approved the overall spending bill, 217-199. It includes nearly \$59 billion for the Interior Department, Environmental Protection Agency and Treasury Department.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen, R-N.J., said the bill funds vital programs that make Americans safer, protect environmental resources and create jobs, especially in small businesses. The bill also provides money to fight the opioid epidemic, stop cyberattacks and fight devastating wildfires, he said.

Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., said the bill "fails the American people" and puts the environment and public health at risk. The measure cuts funding for the EPA, the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Endangered Species Act, while limiting federal action on climate change and thwarting EPA efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay and other waterways, she said.

The measure now goes to the Senate.

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Florida OKs \$19M For Election Security After Hack Attempts

By Brendan Farrington

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) – Florida lawmakers on Thursday approved the use of a \$19 million federal grant to improve election security, a week after a federal indictment alleged Russian hackers targeted county offices before the 2016 presidential election.

The indictment said county offices in Florida, Georgia, and Iowa were probed by Russians, but so far officials in the three states aren't providing details of which counties were targeted and how.

Florida Senate Democratic Leader Oscar Braynon wanted details about the attempted 2016 attacks before the Joint Legislative Budget Commission approved the election security money but got no new information from Secretary of State Ken Detzner.

"Maybe you can even tell us what happened, because I'm not even sure what really happened," said Braynon.

Detzner didn't directly answer the question, but rather said the federal money would be used to prevent future attacks and protect breaches in the election system.

When Braynon again asked for more details about 2016, Detzner again provided nothing new.

"This is a success story for the state of Florida because no breaches occurred in the state data system," Detzner said. "The Florida voter registration system was secure, is secure and will remain secure during the 2018 election."

After the meeting, Detzner was asked by a reporter which counties were targeted in 2016 and he wouldn't say. He did say that Florida elections officials weren't aware of any attempted hacking until being briefed by the FBI last September.

The indictment issued last Friday concludes that 12 Russian agents were part of a massive cyber operation to disrupt the 2016 election. While President Donald Trump signed the bill that provides \$380 million in election security grants, he's still sending mixed messages on whether he believes Russia meddled in the election and whether there's a threat to the midterm elections.

Like Detzner, Georgia and Iowa officials have also failed to provide details on which counties were targeted in their states.

Kevin Hall, spokesman for Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate, said Pate's office doesn't know which counties in Iowa were probed.

"They Googled websites and visited them. That's it," Hall said.

Candice Broce, spokesman for Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp, said she had "no additional information to provide" about which counties in Georgia were probed.

AP writers Ben Nadler in Atlanta and Scott Stewart in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this report.

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Voting Machines In America Are Reassuringly Hard To Hack

[The Economist](#), July 20, 2018

IN THE run-up to the attacks of September 11th 2001, said George Tenet, the former director of the CIA, America's intelligence system was "blinking red". On July 13th Dan Coats, the current director of national intelligence, invoked Mr Tenet's language to convey the magnitude of the threat posed by foreign hackers. "The digital infrastructure that serves this country is literally under attack," he said. "The warning lights are blinking red again." Although Mr Coats expressed concern about infiltration from numerous countries, he called Russia "the most aggressive foreign actor". Meanwhile, the president seems indifferent when it comes to the risk of Russian meddling with the mid-terms in November. How vulnerable are American elections?

If Vladimir Putin's hackers did seek to intervene in the congressional elections in November, they would have two avenues. One, familiar after 2016, is to use social media and pretend news sites to spread disinformation or propaganda. It seems likely that Russian intelligence agencies will continue trying to bolster the Kremlin's preferred candidates and hinder their rivals in the court of online public opinion. In May a Russian news agency with close ties to Mr Putin's government launched a "news" website called USA Really, which publishes a regular stream of articles favourable to Mr Trump. The impact of such campaigns is hard to measure: recent research on their effect in 2016 found that most people reading such stuff already supported Mr Trump (see Lexington). But the races for control of both chambers of Congress now look close enough that propaganda could prove decisive, even if it only sways a tiny sliver of the electorate.

The second, more insidious, method is to complement that tactic with a more direct cyber-attack on voting records or machines. Fortunately, the spectre of hackers in Moscow doctoring actual election results

appears remote. Just before leaving the White House, Barack Obama designated election systems as critical infrastructure. That decision granted election officials access to federal cyber-security experts and to an information-sharing network. The federal government has since provided billions of dollars for securing the administration of elections.

All voting machines are supposed to be "air-gapped" (not connected to the internet), making them much harder to infiltrate from afar. Attackers could try to alter voting results by loading malware onto USB sticks that get plugged into the machines, or embedding it in the code run on them (the government's own hackers used this technique to sabotage Iran's air-gapped nuclear centrifuges). But even if Russia did manage to sneak a virus onto some of these machines, it would need to remain hidden during routine logic and accuracy tests, conducted before the election, which ensure that the devices' tabulated totals equal the sum of the individual votes entered on them. Rigorous reviews of software and vote tabulations have revealed no evidence of any electronic ballot-stuffing, deleting or switching in 2016.

Voter lists are not so well protected. Even without foul play, simple clerical errors in state and city databases of voters' names and addresses caused long delays at polling places in California in 2018 and North Carolina in 2016, for example. In Palm Beach County, Florida, similar mistakes caused 2,000 properly registered voters to be turned away in the presidential primaries of 2016. And, unlike the machines that tally up votes, the computers that house this information are connected to the internet and often lack robust defences against intrusion. In 2016 Russian hackers gained access to the state elections server in Illinois, proving they could penetrate even a fairly well-secured system.

If hackers were able to alter the recorded addresses of a few thousand voters with African-American family names, for example, they could disenfranchise these voters, whose identification documents would no longer match their listed addresses. Congressmen should spend a bit less time bloviating about Russians on Facebook and more time preventing that.

U.S. Energy Regulator Wants More Disclosure Of Cyber Attacks

By Jim Finkle

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

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Forward-Thinking Strategies Can Secure The Power Grid

By Ryan Brichant

[NextGov](#), July 19, 2018

Defending America's interconnected electric, oil and gas networks from physical and digital disruption is a defining challenge of our time: It requires actions that acknowledge the origins and complexities of energy infrastructures, and how they intersect with the internet's ever-evolving capabilities and vulnerabilities, as well as the complex oversight mechanisms that have evolved over time.

For policymakers, power utilities and other stakeholders, energy security will always remain an inherently "physical" arena, focused more on raw materials and commodities than computers. The U.S. maintains the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, for example, which plays a critical role in U.S. energy, economic and national security. Whether it's petroleum reserves or finite elements like helium, maintaining these emergency stockpiles rightfully falls within the domain of the federal government.

The readiness of coal, nuclear, wind, oil, solar and other power stations to perform under all conditions presents a valid and critical national security issue. However, we should not let debates about any one piece of this energy portfolio's future sideline the strategic priority of securing connected systems they all rely on everywhere.

The interwoven physical, commodity and internet risks of energy security flashed back into focus recently, when the Trump administration moved to specifically increase grid operators' reliance on nuclear power and coal-fired plants. The Energy Department characterized these facilities as being more centralized in operation, with coal piles and reactors permanently situated on site for generation—in Energy's reasoning, less susceptible to disruptions from cyberattacks that could impede propane flows to natural gas plants, for example.

Reactions to the Energy order are mixed, and arrive as both Energy and the Homeland Security Department have promulgated new national cybersecurity strategies including calls for the public agencies and private sectors (energy generation, transmission and brokers in-between) to cooperate more closely to better secure our interconnected energy systems. Chief among these strategies' calls-to-action is that the rise of the internet of things and industrial internet of things and the risk these devices potentially introduce when deployed alongside energy resources—threatens grid and pipeline operation. However, with

greater connectivity comes efficiency and a safer grid that allows continuous monitoring.

Shifting Focus

With major cybersecurity concerns in the fast-moving world of IoT and energy, the focus must shift. It sounds simple, but owners and operators of our power systems need better ways of knowing what assets (IT and otherwise) they have in their production environments, which have computing capability, and which (gulp!) connect to the internet.

Such a task brings challenges: Power system operators cannot use the same tools to manage connected plant equipment as corporations use to oversee, say, computer workstations. Power system environments are complex, with such "things" as valves monitored by connected sensors, SCADA controllers or ruggedized field systems. Protecting these connected entities in a wider energy security campaign is not like deploying anti-malware or encryption tools across fleets of PCs. Traditional cybersecurity scans can degrade the performance of switching and other critical gear, risking possible system downtime or worse.

Regardless of whether these systems or nodes are persistently connected to the internet, they are still susceptible to exploitation (through vulnerabilities or deliberately introduced malware, etc.). Attackers usually need to only gain entry into one place to move laterally into other systems, often completely unfettered. So while it is tempting to gauge "which" collection, combustion or generation facility has the greatest internet exposure and attack surface, policymakers and operators should instead focus on determining and managing their true connected footprint—which is not static over time. Security strategies should stress passive detection of connected systems and the monitoring of their levels of activity, first. A "do no harm" approach reassures operators that security does not need to come at the expense of reliability while identifying and correcting widespread "hygiene" problems.

So what else can be done to protect these complex and sensitive environments? Consider the following:

Work together. While the new electric grid initiative is still taking shape, developing and expanding this program will do far more for energy sector cybersecurity than just investing in one power source. Energy and Homeland Security must work together with industry to truly shape industry behavior, and we all must accept that the security of our national power infrastructure is a shared responsibility. Some of the costs of making it secure must inevitably be borne by us consumers.

Learn from what exists. The federal government has learned a thing or two about how to secure sensitive

IP-enabled equipment, such as x-ray machines in military hospitals or optical scanners in processing facilities. In programs like Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation, the federal government is implementing “old” (but good) principles with cutting-edge tools like agentless asset detection. Learning from this can help vastly improve security without risk of disruption to critical government services.

Test, implement, measure. Find a way to test “state of the art.” As with any new cutting-edge security technology, people are reluctant to implement something without proof. Power operators need more testing capabilities to accelerate the adoption of innovative, effective security solutions. Then, they have to measure improvement, to determine how much they are able to improve their security postures, or not. Metrics start with domain awareness, and fear of regulatory action/penalties should not encumber the transparent measurement of progress.

The U.S. election triggered a multitude of headlines about the insecurity of voting systems. Regardless of anyone’s particular political leanings, there is no doubt that our adversaries are actively seeking ways to disrupt American society and institutions. And our adversaries fully realize that widespread, prolonged power outages would do this, so we should approach the threat like the critical national critical priority that it is. Whether its coal and nuclear today—or breakthrough fuel sources tomorrow—we have to keep a clear and consistent eye on the digital backbone that simultaneously puts our nation and economy’s energy lifeblood in reach, and at risk.

Ryan Brichant is a vice president and chief technology officer of Global Critical Infrastructure Cyber Security for ForeScout Technologies.

Chinese Hackers Struck Days Before Helsinki Summit

By Dan Boylan

[Washington Times](#), July 19, 2018

Chinese hackers launched a massive attack on internet-connected devices in Finland in an attempt to sweep up audio and visual intelligence ahead of President Trump’s summit there with Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to a private cyber analysis released Thursday.

The attacks on Finnish internet-connected devices originating from ChinaNet, China’s largest internet backbone, began spiking July 12, just four days before Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin met in Helsinki, claimed the analysis by the Seattle-based cybersecurity firm F5.

While Finland generally endures a minor amount of hacking activity, the analysis noted, overall cyber attacks jumped about 2,800 percent during the days surrounding the Trump-Putin summit.

The revelations of Chinese cyber espionage emerged amid the escalating trade war between Washington and Beijing — friction that has caused stock prices to drop in China, whose currency, the renminbi, traded at its lowest point in a year against the U.S. dollar Thursday.

Chinese and U.S. officials continued to exchange barbs after last week’s announcement by the White House that plans were in place to apply tariffs on up to \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods. Earlier this month, Washington and Beijing levied tit-for-tat tariffs on \$34 billion on each other’s goods.

While Chinese leadership has described Washington’s latest threats as “totally unacceptable,” Trump administration officials have continued to demand China reform its hardline trade negotiating tactics and curtail the theft of American technology and intellectual property — a major campaign pledge of Mr. Trump.

Seeking to strengthen trade ties outside the West, Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday took his first trip abroad since starting his second five-year term in office after Beijing abolished presidential term limits, allowing him to rule infinitely.

Mr. Xi visited the United Arab Emirates just after news broke from the Persian Gulf country that its state-owned Abu Dhabi National Oil Company had awarded \$1.6 billion in contracts to the China National Petroleum Company.

Meanwhile on Capitol Hill, members of the House Intelligence committee zeroed in Thursday on Beijing’s penchants for intellectual property theft and industrial espionage, taking testimony from some of America’s leading China-watchers.

Michael Brown, a former Symantec CEO and Pentagon adviser, testified to the committee about specific areas where the Chinese government appears to have already comprised U.S. national security.

“Chinese companies already own significant parts of the military supply chain,” said Mr. Brown, who added that Beijing has “designs of U.S. military equipment” and is closely monitoring U.S. military advances in the fields of artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

Michael Pillsbury, Director of the Center on Chinese Strategy at the Hudson Institute, offered excerpts from his book “The Hundred-Year Marathon” and explained the big-picture problem that has been bubbling ever since China re-entered the world economy in the 1970s.

U.S. eagerness to integrate China into international bodies, such as the World Trade Organization, mean that Washington, regardless of who was in charge, often overlooked Chinese misconduct, including the way it acquired foreign science and technology, Mr. Pillsbury said.

"From the Chinese point view," he said, "it is only very recently that they have been called out for this type of conduct. That is one reason why we are going to have a very hard time stopping these practices."

Exclusive: Britain Says Huawei 'Shortcomings' Expose New Telecom Networks Risks

By Jack Stubbs

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

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U.K. Shows Unease About Using Huawei Equipment

The government previously said Chinese company's gear didn't present significant national security risks

By Chip Cummins

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Bill Aims To Block Foreign Ownership Of Election Systems

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) – Days after Maryland officials announced that an election service vendor was acquired by a company linked to a Russian oligarch, two congressmen are introducing legislation requiring that election systems vendors are owned and controlled by domestic companies.

Rep. John Delaney, a Democrat, and Rep. Andy Harris, a Republican, are set to introduce the legislation Thursday.

The Protecting Election Systems from Foreign Control Act would also require the Department of Homeland Security and the Election Assistance Commission to provide guidance and technical assistance to state and local election agencies. It would establish a database so agencies can verify whether a vendor is not foreign controlled and create an annual review process to examine changes in ownership or control.

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Government's Cyber Monitoring Program Would Become Law Under House Bill

By Aaron Boyd

[NextGov](#), July 19, 2018

At least one lawmaker is a fan of one of the Homeland Security Department's governmentwide cybersecurity initiatives and has introduced legislation to ensure it sticks around and evolves along with private-sector technology.

Rep. John Ratcliffe, R-Texas, Wednesday introduced the Advancing Cybersecurity Diagnostics and Mitigation Act, which would codify the Homeland Security Department's Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation, or CDM program, a suite of tools for agencies to monitor malicious traffic and hacking attempts.

The program was created in 2012 and has recently been upgraded to CDM Dynamic and Evolving Federal Enterprise Network Defense, or CDM DEFEND, a new tack intended to speed up the acquisition process and make it easier to make new technologies and solutions available.

"Our goal with this new legislation is to help boost the long-term success of the CDM program by ensuring it keeps pace with the cutting-edge capabilities in the private sector," Ratcliffe said in a statement. "We're also safeguarding agencies from getting stuck with technologies that will soon become outdated or unsupported by their vendors."

Ratcliffe introduced the bill as an amendment to the statute that created the Homeland Security Department in 2002.

The bill outlines the responsibilities of the CDM program, including developing network monitoring tools and the acquisition vehicles needed to spread them across government. But the legislation adds some additional duties, as well, such as providing regular risk reports to federal agencies.

The bill would also give Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen 180 days to put a comprehensive CDM strategy in writing. That strategy must include: a description of the program, an outline of interagency coordination, a list of obstacles to deployment and recommendations for current and future agency programs.

After that, Nielsen and DHS will have another 90 days to use CDM data to create a cybersecurity risk assessment that covers the entire federal enterprise.

"At the end of the day, cybersecurity is national security—and that means we've got to ensure we're

addressing the dangers at our digital borders through risk-based, cost-effective strategies enabled by programs like CDM,” Ratcliffe said. “I’m hopeful for the strong support of our bill to back this important mission, as the cyber threats we face continue to evolve.”

White House Appoints Federal Chief Information Security Officer

By Heather Kuldell, Aaron Boyd

[NextGov](#), July 19, 2018

The Office of Management and Budget announced Grant Schneider will be the second federal chief information security officer.

As such, Schneider will lead cybersecurity strategy across the executive branch and chair the CISO Council. Schneider has been filling the CISO role in an acting capacity and is the National Security Council’s senior director for cybersecurity. He will continue serving in his position the NSC, according to an administrative official.

“Grant Schneider brings extensive cybersecurity experience well aligned to lead efforts in securing government systems from cyberattacks,” said Margaret Weichert, OMB’s chief management official.

Schneider served as deputy to the first federal CISO, Gregory Touhill. He previously served as the Defense Intelligence Agency’s chief information officer. Touhill stepped down from the role in January 2017, just before President Donald Trump’s inauguration.

“Grant was my deputy when I served in the position and has a firm grasp on the threats, vulnerabilities and current cyber issues. We need the federal CISO as leadership is needed to implement best practices to protect the people’s information,” Touhill told Nextgov. “I learned in the military, when you don’t have someone ‘calling cadence’ what you get is a mob.”

Editor’s Note: This article was updated with a comment from Greg Touhill.

White House Makes Grant Schneider The Top Cybersecurity Official In Government

By Sean Lyngaas

[CyberScoop](#), July 19, 2018

Veteran government IT official Grant Schneider will serve as federal chief information security officer, an influential policy role charged with implementing cybersecurity practices across the executive branch, the Office of Management and Budget announced Thursday.

“Grant Schneider brings extensive cybersecurity experience well aligned to lead efforts in securing government systems from cyberattacks,” Margaret Weichert, OMB’s deputy director for management, said in a statement.

“As chief information security officer, Grant will play a key role in making sure the federal government’s technology networks are safe and secure,” she added.

The federal CISO chairs the CISO Council, which allows collaboration across agencies on issues like identity management and vulnerability response.

Schneider had been serving as federal CISO on an acting basis until today. He is also a senior director for cybersecurity at the National Security Council (NSC), where he helps manage the government’s cyber defense strategy.

In June, the White House tapped Schneider to head the Vulnerabilities Equities Process (VEP), the U.S. government mechanism for deciding whether to hoard software bugs for intelligence purposes or disclose them to the private sector so they can be fixed.

Schneider will continue in his role at NSC in addition to the CISO job, a administration official told CyberScoop. That means he will maintain control over the VEP, an NSC spokesperson confirmed.

Known as a steady and experienced policymaker, Schneider has served in various information security roles over the years in the Office of Personnel Management, Office of Management and Budget, and Defense Intelligence Agency.

Chris Bing contributed to this story.

FOSTA Sex Trafficking Law Becomes Center Of Debate About Tech Responsibility

[NBC News](#), July 19, 2018

A law meant to stop sex trafficking — lauded by Ivanka Trump, signed into law by her father in April, and championed by members of Congress who have been working for years to crack down on bad actors like Backpage.com — is now being challenged by tech company advocates and internet rights groups who say it violates the First Amendment.

The tech industry-funded nonprofit Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) will urge a federal judge Thursday to stall enforcement of the law, known as FOSTA-SESTA, which holds websites accountable if they knowingly facilitate criminal activity like human trafficking that happens on their platforms. (FOSTA is short for the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, and SESTA is the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act.)

While FOSTA-SESTA was hailed as a victory by many advocates for survivors of sex trafficking, some in the tech community have pushed back on the law over concerns that the government is moving to require tech companies to censor the internet.

Prior to passage of FOSTA-SESTA, tech companies had widely been protected against being held liable for any illegal content or business conducted on their platforms.

"FOSTA attacks online speakers who speak favorably about sex work by imposing harsh penalties for any website that might be seen as 'facilitating' prostitution or 'contribute to sex trafficking,'" EFF said in a press release.

EFF's lawyer arguing the case, Robert Corn-Revere, has previously represented Backpage.com, a website that was shut down by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and its CEO Carl Ferrer, who pleaded guilty in three state courts to money laundering and conspiracy to facilitate prostitution.

Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, one of the architects of the law, said this is not a free speech issue but instead about protecting victims of sex trafficking.

"Victims of this abhorrent crime can finally have their day in court and the websites that knowingly facilitate sex trafficking are being shut down and being held liable for their actions," he said. Portman led a 20 month U.S. Senate investigation that found Backpage complicit in trafficking. He says the shuttering of Backpage.com, which he called the "industry leader in sex trafficking," is a victory.

Prior to passage of FOSTA-SESTA, Backpage's defense in response to charges that it proliferated prostitution and trafficking was that it's not responsible for ads posted on the site. That argument is based on Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which says online service providers cannot be held liable for content provided by third parties.

After the law passed, Craigslist shut down its "personals" section.

FOSTA-SESTA is a definitive turning point for the internet and holds platforms accountable in an unprecedented way. EFF's constitutional challenge is championed by those who complain FOSTA-SESTA could create an advantage for bigger companies with the technology and money to make sure that their platforms comply with the law.

"Every effort to turn platforms into content police favors the well-established, well-capitalized platforms," said Mike Godwin, senior fellow at the nonprofit research firm R Street Institute and the former general counsel for Wikimedia Foundation. "If you are a startup, you now have to hire a thousand lawyers and contract workers to screen content."

But longtime advocate for survivors of child sex trafficking, Mary Mazzio, said EFF's constitutional challenge is disingenuous.

"The child sex trafficking survivors, along with the community of adult survivors, nonprofits, and NGOs who fought for the passage of FOSTA-SESTA, are dismayed to find that EFF, which began a disinformation campaign prior to the bill's passage, has continued its relentless assault on any attempt to hold websites accountable that engage in criminal conduct," Mazzio said.

Biggest Blood Testing Lab In The U.S. Breached By Hackers

By Lee Mathews

[Forbes](#), July 19, 2018

With dozens of locations across the United States, LabCorp is one of the world's largest clinical laboratory testing groups. It also became the latest entry on the list of U.S. healthcare industry players to be impacted by a data breach.

Over the weekend LabCorp announced that it was investigating unauthorized activity on its network. According to a company statement, there is "no evidence of unauthorized transfer or misuse of data." Given the highly-sensitive nature of the personal information LabCorp handles on a daily basis, that would be a best-case scenario.

Few details about the incident have been shared so far. When the suspicious activity was detected, LabCorp responded by shutting down portions of its network. Systems linked to test processing and customer access were temporarily taken offline. LabCorp believes that the malicious activity did not spread beyond its diagnostic equipment.

At this stage of the investigation it appears that the LabCorp attack may have followed a familiar pattern. On Tuesday an FBI spokesperson confirmed that the Bureau is aware of a "possible ransomware attack involving LabCorp's network system."

That shouldn't come as a surprise. Cybercriminals have been launching sustained spearphishing attacks on organizations like LabCorp for years in the hopes of spreading ransomware. Such companies are particularly enticing targets because of the value – and amount – of data that they store. LabCorp's multi-billion-dollar revenues only add to its appeal.

LabCorp sits on countless gigabytes of irreplaceable patient data that could be locked away by ransomware. It also has very deep pockets. Hackers could be hoping that LabCorp would rather pay a few hundred thousand dollars to make the problem go away rather than spending millions on other measures.

Remediation costs for even a relatively small ransomware outbreak can quickly climb into the millions. IBM pinned the average cost for a business to be around

\$3.86 million in 2017 – and that figure will likely climb this year.

LabCorp's Ransomware Attack Could Leave Millions Of Patients Exposed

By Chuong Nguyen

[Digital Trends](#), July 19, 2018

Millions of patient health records may be at risk after LabCorp, one of the largest medical diagnostics companies in the United States, discovered that its systems had been breached during the weekend of July 14. After detecting suspicious activity on its network, it took immediate action to take parts of its system offline, LabCorp revealed in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

"This temporarily affected test processing and customer access to test results on or over the weekend," LabCorp said in its SEC 8-K filing. "Work has been ongoing to restore full system functionality as quickly as possible, testing operations have substantially resumed today, and we anticipate that additional systems and functions will be restored through the next several days. Some customers of LabCorp Diagnostics may experience brief delays in receiving results as we complete that process."

Though LabCorp has not revealed any additional information about the breach or if its systems have been fully restored, the company stated that it has reported the attack to law enforcement officials. The FBI confirmed that it was notified of the breach, but did not provide additional details. "The FBI is aware of reports of a ransomware attack involving LabCorp's network system," the agency said in a statement to WFMY News 2. "We are monitoring the situation, but cannot comment on whether or not the FBI is involved in any investigation."

Given that ransomware may have been involved, it appears that the attack may have been financially motivated, though it's unclear if the attackers were successful in accessing health records, patient data, or any personal information. The disclosure earlier this year of a Florida Medicaid breach prompted the FBI to issue warnings that there is an increased risk of attacks to healthcare organizations, Fortune reported. Given the nature of the sensitive information available, health records may be worth more when sold on the dark web, and a Verizon Data Breach report revealed that 72 percent of all healthcare attacks were ransomware. In addition to attacks to steal patient data, attacks on healthcare equipment, likely as a form of espionage to steal trade secrets, are also on the rise.

The same Verizon report cautioned that internal actors are the biggest threats to healthcare organizations, though LabCorp has not identified who is responsible for its attack. "Often they are driven by financial gain, such as tax fraud or opening lines of credit with stolen information, fun or curiosity in looking up the personal records of celebrities or family members, or simply convenience," the Verizon report stated.

LabCorp is downplaying the incident, noting that there is "no evidence of unauthorized transfer or misuse of data." The medical lab processes more than 2.5 million tests each week and see more than 115 million patients annually, so there is a lot of information at stake.

TERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS

U.S. Judge Sets Plea Change For Algerian Who Recruited 'Jihad Jane'

By John Shiffman

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Al-Qaida Suspect Linked To Cartoonist Plot To Plead Guilty

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

PHILADELPHIA (AP) – An al-Qaida suspect linked to a plot to kill a Swedish cartoonist intends to plead guilty to terrorism charges in Philadelphia, according to court documents filed Thursday.

Ali Charaf Damache is scheduled to admit his guilt before U.S. District Court Judge Petrese B. Tucker in a hearing Monday, prosecutors told The Philadelphia Inquirer.

A message seeking comment from Damache's attorney, Noah Gorson, wasn't immediately returned Thursday.

Damache had previously pleaded not guilty to charges he was involved in a terror cell that wanted to kill Swedish artist Lars Vilks, who depicted the Prophet Muhammad as a dog. The plot never materialized.

He was brought from Spain to Philadelphia in 2017 to be tried in a civilian court despite President Donald Trump's promise to send terror suspects to the military prison at Guantanamo Bay.

Known as The Black Flag, Damache was accused of seeking out light-skinned women and others who did not fit the traditional terrorist profile. His targets included Colleen LaRose, a Pennsylvania woman who called herself "Jihad Jane" online; Jamie Paulin-Ramirez, a single mother from Colorado; and Mohammad Hassan

Khalid, who at the time was a high school honors student from Maryland. They were all eventually arrested.

Damache married Paulin-Ramirez the day she traveled to Ireland to meet him in 2009. Paulin-Ramirez eventually helped the FBI investigate the terror cell.

Officials said that Damache's group recruited men online to wage jihad in South Asia and Europe, and sought to recruit women with western passports to travel through Europe in support of the cause.

LaRose is serving a 10-year prison term. Paulin-Ramirez and Khalid have been released after serving their sentences.

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Appeals Court Hears Florida Lawsuit Seeking FBI 9/11 Records

By Curt Anderson

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

MIAMI (AP) – A Florida online publication asked a federal appeals court Thursday to order a trial be held on its Freedom of Information Act lawsuit seeking FBI documents that may reveal a U.S.-based support network for the 9/11 hijackers.

The case heard before the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals centers on reporting published by the Florida Bulldog about the FBI investigation into a Saudi Arabian family that abruptly left a Sarasota home two weeks before the 2001 terror attacks. One FBI document that was released said that agents had found “many connections” in 2002 between the family and some hijackers who took flying lessons at a nearby airport, including ringleader Mohamed Atta.

Florida Bulldog attorney Thomas Julin told a three-judge panel of the court that the FBI has been dragging its heels on releasing more FBI documents about the Sarasota case submitted to the 9/11 Review Commission, improperly redacted more material and claimed too much was exempt from FOIA release. Julin wants a lower court to hold a full FOIA trial on the dispute.

“Obviously, we don’t know what is in those documents. We think there is severe over-classification,” Julin said. “All of that is a huge deterrent to people using the Freedom of Information Act.”

The judges did not immediately issue a ruling.

Media organizations including The Associated Press filed briefs in support of the Florida Bulldog, as did former Florida U.S. Sen. Bob Graham – a former chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Graham, who attended the hearing, said in an interview that the public needs the full picture of how the hijackers pulled off attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

“The government’s conclusion is that there is no evidence linking the Saudi government to a facilitation of the hijackers,” said Graham, also a former Florida governor. “Our feeling, to the contrary, is that there is abundant evidence.”

The former Sarasota residents, Abdulaziz and Anoud al-Hijji, have denied having any connections with or supporting the hijackers. They now live overseas.

The FBI has discounted the accuracy of its own 2002 “many connections” memo but won’t explain why. Justice Department attorney Thomas Byron told the judges Thursday that a lower court judge made the correct ruling for the government and that the FBI search for documents sought by the Florida Bulldog was reasonable.

“Reporters are not entitled to a perfect search. They are entitled to a reasonable search. We went way beyond that,” Byron said. “It was above and beyond what was required.”

The FBI has also asserted seven exemptions to the release of some material under FOIA, including that some would endanger national security and expose sensitive law enforcement techniques and sources.

Previous stories on the al-Hijjis have reported on how the family left behind cars, clothes, furniture and even a refrigerator full of food when they left their Sarasota home before the 9/11 attacks. Possible connections to hijackers include records at the neighborhood’s gate indicating some had visited the home as well as telephone calls involving them, authorities have said.

Circuit Judge William Pryor suggested the best course might be to send the case back to Miami U.S. District Judge Cecilia M. Altonaga for a full FOIA trial so that the documents and the FBI claims could be fully evaluated.

“Why am I not right about that?” Pryor asked Byron.

“I don’t think you need to do that. The (lower) court did not abuse its discretion,” Byron replied.

Separately, the Florida Bulldog is awaiting a different Florida federal judge’s decision on whether some or all of the 80,000 pages of FBI files on the Sarasota investigation should be made public. That case has been pending for six years.

Follow Curt Anderson on Twitter:
<http://twitter.com/Miamicurt>

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The Cleveland FBI, Terrorism Stings, And The Delicate Balance Between Entrapment And Public Safety

[Cleveland Plain Dealer](#), July 19, 2018

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Federal agents and prosecutors described the arrest of a man accused of plotting a Fourth of July terrorist attack in Cleveland as the latest example of authorities heading off a potential threat before it could come to fruition.

But in the days since the arrest, critics have questioned if Demetrius Pitts had the capability to carry out the attack he is accused of plotting. Pitts had been staying at a rehabilitation facility in Maple Heights, and an FBI informant gave him a bus pass and a cellphone to conduct reconnaissance in Cleveland, according to an affidavit filed in federal court.

Federal officials argue they must be proactive in pursuing counter-terrorism cases because the risks involved are so great. In the Pitts case, FBI special agent in charge Stephen Anthony said authorities could not “sit back and wait for Mr. Pitts to commit a violent attack.”

“We don’t have the luxury of hoping an individual decides not to harm someone or get others to act, especially when his continued, repeated intentions were to do exactly that,” Anthony said during a news conference announcing Pitts’ arrest.

Civil rights advocates and defense attorneys counter by saying the Pitts case may be the latest in a series of controversial cases involving Muslim persons labeled as homegrown terrorists. They expressed concern that many counter-terrorism prosecutions amount to “sting operations” where undercover agents lead vulnerable people who exhibit signs of mental illness to the edge of committing crimes.

“This case strains credulity,” said Julia Shearson, the executive director of the Cleveland chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. “We don’t have all the information yet, but on the face of the complaint, it looks like [Pitts] had very limited means to carry this out.”

Critics of the Pitts case acknowledge there are legitimate terrorist threats that must be investigated and prosecuted. But they question if the 48-year-old man represented a real threat prior to his arrest.

Pitts expressed a desire to join al-Qaida and kill U.S. citizens – including military personnel and their families – as he told the undercover agent of his plot to conduct a July 4 attack in Cleveland, according to an affidavit filed in federal court. He told the undercover

agent he planned to fill a van with explosives, the affidavit says.

The FBI first detected Pitts through threatening Facebook posts, the affidavit says. That fact alone raises questions about the seriousness of those threats, said Stephen F. Downs, an attorney and co-founder of Project SALAM. The New York City-based project provides legal support to Muslims and maintains a database of domestic terrorism prosecutions.

“This doesn’t suggest a real terrorist. A real terrorist isn’t going to do that,” Downs said about Pitts’ online posts. “A bank robber isn’t going to put up a Facebook post saying he’s going to rob a bank.”

Critics also questioned the fact that the affidavit does not clearly connect Pitts to anyone other than the undercover agent. The affidavit details how the agent discussed a basic plan for an attack with Pitts, and helped Pitts acquire the bus pass and cellphone he needed to conduct reconnaissance in Cleveland.

U.S. Attorney Justin Herdman said after Pitts’ arrest that his decision to accept the cellphone and bus pass, and then use them to take photos and videos of Cleveland, strengthen federal prosecutors’ case against him.

“When you’ve got someone repeatedly expression an intention to commit a violent act, and then takes steps to further an attack – like in this case conducting reconnaissance and filming videos – it absolutely weighs in favor of a provable federal criminal violation,” Herdman said.

Critics see pattern of questionable counter-terrorism cases

The Human Right Watch and Columbia Law School’s Human Rights Institute authored a 2014 report that criticized the FBI for using “aggressive sting operations” against Muslims accused of plotting homegrown terrorist threats. Such prosecutions also have the effect of making the Muslim community suspicious and fearful of authorities, said Tarek Ismail, a co-author of the report.

“The vast majority of these cases look suspiciously at Muslim communities, and have criminal justice solutions that tear those communities apart,” said Ismail, now a senior staff attorney for the Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility project. The project, housed at the City University of New York Law School, provides legal services to the Muslim community and others affected by counter-terrorism policies and practices.

In Northeast Ohio, at least two similar cases have drawn scrutiny in the last six years.

Back in 2012, the FBI arrested five men accused of plotting to blow up the Ohio 82 bridge, which connects

Brecksville with Sagamore Township. In that case, a paid FBI informant discussed possible targets with the five men – members of the Occupy Cleveland movement – and introduced them to an undercover agent to buy what they thought were plastic explosives.

In 2015, the FBI arrested a Sheffield Lake man accused of buying an AK-47 from an undercover agent for the purpose of supporting the Islamic State terrorist group. Amir Al-Ghazi, 41, later pleaded guilty to terrorism-related charges. Last month, a federal judge sentenced him to 16 years in prison.

The FBI began monitoring Al-Ghazi in 2014, after he pledged his support to the Islamic State on social media. He tried for months to buy an assault rifle to use as a “prop” in propaganda videos, and thought he succeeded when he paid \$400 to buy an AK-47 from an undercover agent in North Olmsted. The FBI subsequently arrested Al-Ghazi.

Civil rights advocates argue that investigators must be mindful that there is a difference between saying something and doing something, said Laura Pitter, the deputy director of Human Rights Watch’s U.S. program.

“There’s a big difference between talking big and claiming that you want to carry out dangerous acts, and actually doing them,” Pitter said. “It’s important that the government only be going after individuals when there is real evidence [of a threat]. We’ve seen that isn’t always the case.”

From authorities’ perspective, it’s critical to investigate suspicious online posts because the internet represents “a means of surreptitious communications and ready access to like-minded individuals,” said Cleveland attorney Chris Georgalis, a former federal prosecutor who has worked on terrorism cases.

“It’s certainly facilitated these types of attacks, but from the government’s perspective, it’s also a means of accessing a treasure trove of evidence,” Georgalis said after Pitts’ arrest.

Conversely, the FBI has been criticized for failing to adequately investigate possible threats. For example, after the Feb. 14 massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the FBI said it failed to act on a tip that the suspect had access to guns and a “desire to kill people,” according to The Washington Post.

But Downs sees a double-standard in the way people perceive questionable messages that are posted online by Muslims, versus similar messages posted by non-Muslims.

“If a Muslim does this, they’re a terrorist,” Downs said. “If another person does it, they’re delusional.”

Mental illness and counter-terrorism cases

The counter-terrorism cases that critics regard as questionable often involve persons exhibiting signs of mental illness, experts said.

The report from the Human Rights Watch and Columbia Law School’s Human Rights Institute uses the case of Rezwan Ferdaus as an example. Ferdaus pleaded guilty in 2012 to planning an attack on a federal building, and is now serving a 17-year prison sentence.

Ferdaus planned to acquire a remote-controlled aircraft, similar to a drone, and pack it with explosives before flying it into the Pentagon, authorities said.

Ferdaus was suffering from depression and seizures during the time he was in contact with an undercover agent, the 2014 report says. An FBI agent also told Ferdaus’ father that he “obviously” had mental health problems, the report says.

Experts could not say how many counter-terrorism cases involve people with mental illnesses. But civil rights advocates argue that suspects exhibiting signs of mental illness may be better served by treatment, rather than prosecution.

Pitts’ mental health has not been referenced by investigators or in a series of public records reviewed by cleveland.com. But Downs reviewed Pitts’ conversations with the undercover agent, and he is concerned Pitts may have an underlying mental health issue.

“It’s so sad, in a way, because the country could look at these cases and say these are people who need help,” Downs said.

Government officials have opted for rehabilitative programs in some counter-terrorism cases, said Karen Greenberg, the director of Fordham University’s Center on National Security. Federal judges have at times recommended pretrial diversion programs and psychological therapy in lieu of prison, she said.

In some cases – particularly those involving young people – law enforcement officials have also considered diversionary programs rather than pursuing an indictment, Greenberg said.

“The FBI can also take the lead and make some judgment calls,” she said. “My understanding is that they have done that in a number of these cases.”

Experts said authorities could assuage any concerns related to counter-terrorism investigations by focusing on cases involving a clear link to criminal activity – rather than a person’s online threats.

“Really, what the FBI needs to be doing is focusing on cases where there may be some nexus to criminal activity,” Ismail said.

Civil rights advocates see pressure to plead guilty

The FBI’s approach to counter-terrorism cases changed after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Downs and Ismail said. Investigators began to focus more on

preventing crimes, by monitoring anyone exhibiting the "potential for violence."

"Under the guidelines they've adopted, they are simply not going to allow any possibility that a person may do something," Downs said.

There are no statistics than can say how many counter-terrorism cases involve legitimate threats, experts said. But many defendants plead guilty prior to trial because the risk of a conviction and a longer prison term are so great.

Even if a defense attorney argues that a counter-terrorism investigation amounted to entrapment, that's difficult to prove in court. In fact, no one in the U.S. has ever succeeded in using entrapment as a defense in a terrorism case, Greenberg said.

Federal law requires a defendant to prove that government agents induced him to commit a crime, and that he otherwise lacked the predisposition to commit the crime.

Determining if a person was predisposed to committing a crime can involve looking at his background. Civil rights advocates argue that a suspect's Muslim identity can unfairly prejudice the argument against him.

Proving an entrapment defense is also complicated by the fact that the "ready commission of a criminal act" – i.e., the acceptance of a government agent's "assistance" in committing a crime – has been found to demonstrate predisposition.

Experts agreed there are legitimate counter-terrorism cases that must be pursued, but they are concerned about investigations unfairly target the Muslim community.

"[Authorities] continue to drum up this bogeyman. That causes real serious risks in our society, and has real serious impacts on our community," Ismail said.

Herdman said after Pitts' arrest that federal agents and prosecutors are "not in the business of volunteering ideas to people who already are self-radicalized." He also said it's important for investigators to step in and make and arrest if they feel there is a legitimate threat to public safety.

"Any time the risk to public safety outweighs the development of additional evidence, we have to act in those cases," Herdman said. "That's really what the calculus comes down to."

But civil rights advocates argued that identifying a person posting threats online and getting them into treatment or counseling could be a better method for addressing some cases, instead of "sting operations" that lead to the person being prosecuted.

"We want the country to be safe, and we want law enforcement to have the tools and resources to combat

serious threats, because we recognize there are national security concerns," Shearson said. "But we have serious reservations about the use of some of these tactics, when we think there are other ways to interdict these people earlier on."

Downtown Cleveland Terrorism Suspect: 'I Just Want To Get The Case Over With'

[Cleveland Plain Dealer](#), July 19, 2018

CLEVELAND, Ohio – A man accused of plotting a terrorist attack on spectators watching Fourth of July fireworks in downtown Cleveland interrupted a federal magistrate judge on Thursday and said, "I just want to get the case over with."

Demetrius Pitts was in Magistrate Judge David Ruiz's courtroom for a hearing on a waiver of his speedy trial rights, which gives the U.S. Attorney's Office an additional two months to charge him.

Pitts, 48, did not elaborate on that comment, which he made as Ruiz outlined the reasons for the hearing.

Federal law requires prosecutors to formally charge a suspect within 30 days of his or her arrest, unless the suspect agrees to extend that timeline. Formal charges can be filed either by a grand jury indictment or a criminal information.

Pitts was arrested July 1 and was preliminarily charged via a criminal complaint. Without an extension, a grand jury would have had to issue formal charges against him by July 31. Now, it has until Sept. 29.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Baepler told Ruiz that she, Pitts and Pitts' lawyer agreed to the extension after some preliminary discussions. She said the two-month window will give her and federal public defender Charles Fleming time to "have some discussions prior to indictment."

Baepler declined to elaborate after the hearing. Fleming said it's too early to say whether Pitts will enter a plea deal and that he is still evaluating all the evidence.

Ruiz acknowledged the extension was to give attorneys on both sides more time for investigation, negotiations and preparation.

Pitts also said Thursday he took psychiatric medication. When Ruiz asked whether that impeded his ability to understand the court proceedings, Pitts responded, "I can't answer that, sir." Fleming then said he believes his client understands.

The charges against Pitts accuse him of attempting to provide material support to al-Qaida, a designated foreign terrorist organization, is in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service.

Federal prosecutors say the Cincinnati native plotted his attack in the name of al-Qaida.

Pitts, who also goes by Abdur Raheem Rafeeq and Salah ad-Deem Osama Waleed, scoped out an area to park a van full of explosives near Voinovich Park, according to court filings.

The statements the FBI said Pitts made about a violent attack were mostly to agents or confidential informants, according to the complaint. An informant gave Pitts a bus pass to travel downtown and a cellphone he later used to text an undercover agent, authorities say.

FBI Special Agent in Charge Stephen Anthony declined to say during a July 2 news conference whether Pitts had access to, or was capable of making, an explosive. Pitts had the "desire and intent" to conduct the attack, Anthony said.

Pitts has criminal convictions stretching back to 1989, including for robbery, domestic violence and theft.

Save for a recent stay in a nursing and rehabilitation facility in Maple Heights, he has few apparent ties to Cleveland.

The Cleveland FBI, terrorism stings, and the delicate balance between entrapment and public safety

American Accused Of Being ISIS Fighter In Syria Faces Prosecution In U.S.

By Rukmini Callimachi, Eric Schmitt And Charlie Savage

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

Coalition-backed forces in northern Syria have captured a 28-year-old United States citizen who is believed to have been fighting for the Islamic State, one of only a handful of Americans to be apprehended on the battlefield, officials said.

Ibraheem Musaibli, who is from Dearborn, Mich., was seized by the Syrian Democratic Forces this month as he tried to escape the Middle Euphrates River Valley, where the American-backed militia has been working to root out one of the last pockets of Islamic State control.

Mr. Musaibli was transferred to a holding facility, where he was identified as a member of the militant group by another detainee, according to one administration official briefed on the arrest.

The authorities have set in motion a plan to bring him to the United States for prosecution, along with an Indiana woman whose husband was an Islamic State member and who has also been detained.

The case is a test of America's ability to legally pursue suspected members of the terrorist group captured on the battlefield, a goal that has proved elusive in recent months. Last September, the same militia captured another American at a checkpoint in the

battle zone, but the Justice Department decided there was insufficient admissible evidence to prosecute him.

In the case of Mr. Musaibli and the other detainee, identified as Samantha Elhassani, the authorities are banking on the fact that the two have already been indicted in sealed court proceedings, according to authorities. The details of their capture were confirmed by officials from three government agencies, all of whom requested anonymity in order to discuss sensitive information.

Mr. Musaibli is expected to face charges of supporting the terrorist group, also known as ISIS.

Spokesmen for the State, Justice and Defense Departments, and for the F.B.I., declined to comment.

The authorities say that Ms. Elhassani traveled to Syria with her husband and children. When her husband was killed fighting for ISIS, they say, she and her four children, the youngest of whom is 8 months old, made their way to a refugee camp guarded by the Syrian Democratic Forces, where she identified herself to local authorities.

Ms. Elhassani's 10-year-old son once appeared in an ISIS propaganda video pledging to carry out attacks against the West, raising fears that he had been radicalized, officials said. She and her children will be transported on the same military flight carrying Mr. Musaibli back to the United States, they said.

Only a few dozen Americans are known to have traveled to Syria to join the Islamic State.

A database maintained by George Washington University's Program on Extremism has identified 71 American citizens who traveled to either Iraq or Syria to join the jihad. Of these, at least 24 have been killed. The whereabouts of another 29 is unknown; 18 either returned to the United States or are in jail.

Mr. Musaibli had maintained a low profile and did not appear in the George Washington database, although he was known to law enforcement officials.

As a teenager in Michigan, he dropped out of high school to help his father run a perfume store, according to his younger brother. He married, had a son and eventually moved to Yemen.

Officials believe he traveled to Syria in approximately 2015.

Contacted through Facebook Messenger, Mr. Musaibli's younger brother Abe Musaibli, expressed disbelief at the thought that his sibling had joined ISIS. "My brother is a saint," he said. "He wouldn't hurt a fly."

Abe Musaibli said he was not aware that his brother had been taken into custody. The last time they spoke, he said, was two months earlier.

Ibraheem Musaibli sent a series of text messages to his family after leaving for Syria in which he confirmed

his intention to join the Islamic State, said two officials from different agencies who were briefed on the matter.

In the years that followed, he became disillusioned with the militants and sought a way out, the officials said, and his family reached out to the F.B.I. A brief negotiation ensued, said one official, in which the F.B.I. offered to bring him back to the United States in exchange for him turning himself in. He refused, and the negotiations broke down, one official said.

Mr. Musaibli's capture is only the second known instance of a suspected male American ISIS member being captured in Syria.

The first man was apprehended in September at a checkpoint on an active battlefield, adjacent to territory controlled by ISIS, according to court filings. They identify him only as "John Doe."

In his possession was a thumb drive containing internal Islamic State records, including bomb-making materials, court records show. His name, moreover, appears on an internal ISIS intake form, the detailed application that newcomers to the group are asked to fill out upon arrival in ISIS-controlled territory, the records say.

He has since claimed that he went to Syria intending to be a freelance journalist, but was imprisoned by the terrorist group and agreed to work for them as a condition of getting out of jail.

After the Justice Department decided that it lacked sufficient evidence to prosecute him, the military proposed releasing him back in Syria. He is fighting that plan in court.

The John Doe case is emblematic of the challenges that Western democracies face when their citizens are captured fighting for ISIS.

So far, Britain, France and other European nations have refused to take back the majority of their citizens being held in prisons in Syria, fearing that the cases against them would fall apart under the normal rules of criminal prosecution.

In Canada, an Islamic State member who succeeded in slipping past airport security and returning home has not been charged with any crimes, even after he gave a detailed interview to The New York Times describing how he carried out executions on behalf of the militants.

The John Doe case has made military officials leery about taking custody of other detainees. But if Mr. Musaibli is facing a sealed indictment, as officials have indicated, that could make prosecution easier.

"The difference is that here you have a case that is already set up," said Seamus Hughes, the deputy director of George Washington's Program on Extremism.

"That is a very different animal than picking up someone on the battlefield who is nowhere in the system," Mr. Hughes said, adding, "If he is already indicted, then you have enough to build a case, because you had enough to build the indictment."

Adam Goldman and Karam Shoumali contributed reporting.

Suspected ISIS Fighter From Dearborn Captured On Syrian Battlefield

By Robert Snell And Sarah Rahal

[Detroit News](#), July 19, 2018

Dearborn — A Dearborn man believed to be fighting for the Islamic State has been captured in Syria and could face prosecution in the United States.

Ibraheem Musaibli, 28, is believed to be one of only two male Americans captured alive on an Islamic State battlefield. He was taken into custody by coalition-backed forces this month while trying to flee the Middle Euphrates River Valley in northern Syria, according to the New York Times, which first reported his capture.

Musaibli is being held at an undisclosed facility but authorities are planning to bring him to the United States to face criminal charges.

"This is significant because it's one of the first times the Trump administration would use federal courts to prosecute a returning foreign fighter," Seamus Hughes, deputy director of George Washington University's Program on Extremism, told The News.

An FBI spokesman in Detroit declined to comment Thursday.

Musaibli is identified by the newspaper as a high-school dropout who helped his father operate a perfume shop before marrying, fathering a son and moving to Yemen. He is believed to have traveled to Syria in 2015.

His sister, Fatima Musaibli, who lives in Dearborn with her parents, told The News that FBI agents searched their home eight days ago.

"They took our phones, laptops, my brother's old passports, a box full of stuff and said they would return it soon, but it's been more than a week," Fatima Musaibli told The News.

She said Ibraheem Musaibli traveled to Yemen a few years ago but couldn't recall why he returned other than to be with his wife and young son.

She said they weren't notified about her brother's capture until FBI agents arrived on her doorstep and told her and her sons to sit on the living room floor and not move.

"Ibraheem wouldn't do this," she said. "He's not violent and not the type to join such a group. We didn't

believe when my brother Abdullah called saying the New York Times was doing a story.

"We worry for him."

The roots of the FBI investigation were unclear Thursday.

But sealed federal court records in Detroit indicate FBI agents were investigating a man with a similar last name last year.

In January 2017, FBI agents served a search warrant on Facebook information for an account belonging to Abu Abdul Rahman Al-Musibli. The still-active account lists several friends with the last name Musaibli, including one woman in Dearborn.

The next month, in February 2017, the FBI received 820 pages of information from the man's account, according to a copy of the search warrant return obtained by The News. The document was briefly unsealed last year and obtained by The News before a judge resealed the file.

The search warrant affidavit outlining the scope of the investigation and probable cause to search the Facebook account remains sealed in federal court.

The man's Facebook account says Al-Musibli lives in Al Bayda in central Yemen, and features one photo of fighters marching on a battlefield with weapons.

Musaibli sent text messages to relatives after leaving Yemen confirming that he was joining the Islamic State, the Times reported, citing two unnamed officials familiar with the investigation.

Musaibli eventually became disillusioned after arriving in Syria, however, and his family tried to negotiate a way out with the FBI, according to the newspaper.

The FBI offered to return Musaibli to the United States if he surrendered. He refused, and negotiations stalled, the newspaper reported.

An Alarming Guide To The National Security Dangers Of Social Media

By Katherine Voyles

[Task & Purpose](#), July 19, 2018

Clint Watts's engaging new book, *Messing With the Enemy: Surviving in a Social Media World of Hackers, Terrorists, Russians, and Fake News*, is about forms of engagement. Watts's experiences as an Army officer and FBI agent are important to his background. He begins the book with his interactions, through his blog and Twitter feed, with an American-born member of al-Shabaab, Omar Hammami, and then shares his observations about the Syrian Electronic Army's insistent Twitter presence before examining Russian influence operations in the 2016 election.

Watts writes about how social media is exploited to widen divisions between people, organizations, and states. Hammami's fractious, ultimately fatal, relationship with al-Shabaab gave Watts insight into the fractures inside al-Qaeda, which foretells how ISIS's social media-driven caliphate eclipsed al-Qaeda's internet-driven influence. This early illustration illuminates how social media is a self-closed place as well as an engine to drive change in the world, dual realities made possible by its very nature, but that can be used by actors to their own ends.

Messing With the Enemy owes something to the raft of post-9-11 books on cyberspace, cyberwarfare, and counterterrorism. It's not, however, an in-depth look at government programs in the manner of Shane Harris on Total Information Awareness in *The Watchers*, nor is it about America's development and deployment of cyber capabilities.

Social media's distinctive capability and vulnerability, Watts makes us see, is sociality itself. A piece of information sits well with us not only because of its nature, but because it comes from someone we've let in our circle of trust; it is rejected because it comes from someone outside our circle of trust.

Social media vastly complicates this dynamic because the person who posted may not be who their profile and picture declare. Watts's vivid descriptions of the profile pictures and bios of accounts that make Americans think they are interacting with other Americans are among the liveliest parts of the book.

@TEN_GOP, a now-deactivated twitter feed, was meant to look like it came from the Tennessee GOP even though it was controlled by a Russian troll farm called the Internet Research Agency. It was so plausible that well-known Americans with large followings on Twitter retweeted it.

What's shared on social media, Watts makes clear, doesn't stay on social media. The capacity to bring people together or nudge them to act in physical space is potent. His discussions of Jade Helm 15 and the Alaska Back to Russia petition on the WhiteHouse.gov website and Paul Manafort's claim that a NATO airbase in Turkey had been attacked demonstrate the back and forth between what's said online and what happens in the world we all share. In the case of Jade Helm, the power of social media caused a sitting governor to take action.

In fact, what happens on social media spills into the world, which then feeds back into social media. Part of the Russian disinformation campaign involves using contentious social issues to play different sides against each other. In some cases, groups on opposite sides were pushed to meet in the same place at the same

time. The real-life confrontation that resulted was engineered in the virtual world so that it could feed back into that very same world. This looping doesn't merely reproduce existing divisions, it deepens them.

The seeds of this book about media were planted in different media including Watt's Twitter feed @selectedwisdom, a blog of the same name, articles in The Daily Beast and War on the Rocks, and the March 2017 appearance at the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence,

especially his response to a question from Senator James Lankford (R-OK). The visceral immediacy of reading Twitter is blunted by reading a book about reading Twitter. On balance, this is probably good. The roominess of a book allows Watts to develop contexts for being on social media that are lost in the actual experience of being on social media.

Messing With the Enemy is about who we choose to amplify. Reviewing a book is, of course, its own form of amplification, a kind of retweet with comment.

Messing With the Enemy is content well worth sharing.

Katherine Voyles lives, teaches, reads and writes in Seattle.

Judge Tosses Terror Case Convictions, Orders Prisoner Freed

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A federal judge in Virginia called for the immediate release Thursday of a former Marine who was training with a Pakistani terrorist group shortly before the Sept. 11 attacks occurred.

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema in Alexandria ordered several counts of Seifullah Chapman's conviction vacated and ordered the release of Chapman, who was serving a 65-year sentence.

Chapman traveled to Pakistan before the Sept. 11 attacks to train with a group called Lashkar-e-Taiba. After 9/11, Chapman ended his training and returned to the U.S.

In April, the Supreme Court struck down a law allowing deportation of some immigrants who commit crimes. The high court ruled the law was unconstitutionally vague about what crimes would prompt deportation. Four terrorism defendants, including Chapman, argued they were convicted under a law that was similarly vague about describing a "crime of violence."

In April, Brinkema demanded the government show cause for why she shouldn't vacate the convictions obtained more than a decade ago against what prosecutors called a "Virginia jihad network," which used

paintball games in the woods near Fredericksburg as a means of training for holy war. Several group members traveled to Pakistan after Sept. 11 with the goal of joining the Taliban in Afghanistan. At trial, several said they were persuaded to go when the group's spiritual leader, Ali Al-Timimi, said after Sept. 11 that the world was on the verge of an apocalyptic battle between Muslims and nonbelievers.

Chapman admitted attending the Lashkar camp in August 2001 but said he did so not to train for holy war but for a grueling physical challenge in the rugged Pakistani mountains.

Al-Timimi, of Falls Church, was convicted of soliciting treason, among other counts, and sentenced to life in prison.

Masoud Khan, on the other hand, traveled to Pakistan after Sept. 11 to join Lashkar, which group members believed was the best way to get necessary training to join the Taliban. Khan is serving a life sentence.

The fourth defendant affected by Brinkema's order, Ismail Royer, is already out of prison after serving more than a decade. He struck a plea deal in which he admitted helping some group members make contact with Lashkar.

Royer said by phone Thursday that the development in Chapman's case makes him hopeful for his own.

"Even though it wouldn't have a great deal of practical impact, it would eliminate a firearms charge," he said.

Chapman's counts of conviction remain, but Brinkema noted that he had already served more than the 10 years he was sentenced to for the remaining convictions.

Brinkema has already said she objected to being required under federal law to impose sentences she considered "draconian" and suggested she would have preferred to impose sentences of only 10 years against Chapman and Khan.

Chapman and Khan already had their sentences reduced once before. Those reductions occurred in 2005 after the Supreme Court tossed out mandatory sentencing guidelines.

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Dayton Man Sent To Prison For Making False Bomb Threat In 2016

[WDTN-TV Dayton \(OH\)](#), July 19, 2018

FT. MITCHELL, Kentucky (WDTN) – A Dayton man was sent to prison Thursday for making a false bomb threat in 2016.

40-year-old Dana Carter was sentenced to four months in prison for the offense. On October 22, 2016, Carter made multiple phone calls to the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport to report that there was a bomb on an outbound United Airlines flight to Dallas, Texas.

No bomb was located but the flight was canceled and all passengers were rebooked on other flights. Carter admitted that he was supposed to catch the flight and was running late, which prompted him to call in the fake bomb threat in an attempt to delay takeoff.

According to a release from the Department of Justice, Carter must serve 85 percent of his prison sentence under federal law and will be under the supervision of the United States Probation Office for three years.

The FBI's Northern Kentucky Joint Terrorism Task Force and the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport Police Department conducted the investigation.

United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky, Robert M. Duncan, Jr., and Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Louisville Field Office, Amy Hess, made the announcement Thursday after the sentencing.

The United State was represented by Assistant United States Attorney Elaine Leonhard.

How Government Secrecy On Torture Has Stymied The 9/11 Terror Prosecution

[Nation](#), July 19, 2018

Around 9 pm on December 4, 2017, two FBI documents were delivered to the defense teams representing the five Guantánamo detainees on trial in the military commissions for their alleged roles in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. These documents, which the lawyers had been requesting since 2013, would be the focus of proceedings starting at 9 the following morning. The 11th-hour timing of the document drop is not unusual in this legal system, where the prosecution controls when and what governmental information (as well as access to witnesses and resources) will be provided to the defense. Ad Policy

In the 9/11 case, the pretrial discovery process is exceptionally contentious by any measure. The defendants were held for years and tortured in CIA black sites prior to their transfer to Guantánamo in September 2006. Most information about the agency's Rendition, Detention, and Interrogation (RDI) program—although it was terminated years ago—remains a national-security

secret. The defense lawyers, all of whom have top security clearance, have spent years filing motions and arguing to gain information about what happened to their clients in CIA custody, and insist that this information must be discoverable, not least because in capital cases where the death penalty is on the table, heightened due process applies. The prosecution disagrees, insisting that this trial is about the defendants' roles in the crime of 9/11, and that what happened to them afterward has little bearing on their involvement in these events. In lieu of original classified materials about the CIA's program, prosecutors produce—and the judge reviews and approves—summaries of select materials they deem relevant; those summaries obscure specific dates and locations and mask the identities of people with “unique functional identifiers” and pseudonyms (e.g., Interrogator 1, Dr. Shrek).

The two FBI documents delivered that December night provide a glimpse of how the government has strategized in building its case against the 9/11 five. The documents pertain to the so-called “clean team” process, in which FBI agents were tasked to elicit statements untainted by torture after the men were transferred to Guantánamo. The defense teams finally got these documents because Walter Ruiz, the lead lawyer of the team representing Mustafa al-Hawsawi, had pressed the judge, Army Col. James Pohl, to calendar a hearing on whether the military commission is an appropriate venue to try his client. This personal jurisdiction challenge forced the prosecution to provide the defense with information about the FBI's role and its relationship to the CIA torture program, because statements made to the FBI are an important element of the government's case.

That week in December was the 26th round of pretrial hearings in the 9/11 case since the five defendants were arraigned in May 2012. The case actually began years earlier, when the same men were arraigned in June 2008. The Pentagon had pushed to start their trial while George W. Bush was still in office, because his administration had created the Guantánamo detention facility and the military commissions as well as the CIA's RDI program. During the 2008 arraignment, the most “valuable” detainee at Guantánamo, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (aka KSM), who is accused of being the key planner of the 9/11 plot, rejected his military lawyer. He told the judge that he welcomed a death sentence: “That is what I wish—to be martyred.”

Several of the other “brothers,” as they refer to each other, followed suit. Apparently, this suicide-by-military-commission strategy had not been anticipated by the government, and it foiled the plan to make the 9/11 trial a showcase for expeditious American justice. During

Bush's lame-duck period following the 2008 election that Barack Obama had won, the case was stayed.

In November 2009, the Obama administration's Attorney General, Eric Holder, announced that these five men would be transferred from Guantánamo to face trial on terrorism charges in the federal court in Lower Manhattan, close to "the scene of the crime." That plan was derailed

within weeks as a result of domestic political opposition, and the following year Congress passed legislation prohibiting the transfer of any Guantánamo detainees to the United States for any reason, including trial. In May 2011, charges were refiled against the five in accordance with the Military Commissions Act that Congress had passed in October 2009, which revised the 2006 version of the same name. The 2009 MCA requires that any defendant who faces the death penalty must be represented by a government-provided death-qualified lawyer, termed "learned counsel." Current Issue Al-Hawsawi's Week

The 9/11 hearings in December 2017 were described as Mustafa al-Hawsawi's week. His placement in the high-security courtroom symbolizes his place in this group trial; his table is the fifth, behind his four co-defendants. Al-Hawsawi and the defendant whose table is directly in front of his, Ammar al-Baluchi (aka Ali Abdul Aziz Ali), are accused of being money men for the 9/11 conspiracy. Often, al-Hawsawi forgoes attending hearings because he is in constant pain from the sodomization

he endured in black sites, which caused a disfiguring medical condition called rectal prolapse. In October 2016, he underwent rectal surgery, but he still suffers in ways that, as learned counsel Ruiz has explained, force him to constantly choose between eating and defecating painfully, or fasting.

Among the defense teams, Ruiz is regarded—and regards himself—as an outlier because he has been strategizing and striving for years to sever al-Hawsawi's case from the others. He maintains that his client's alleged role is relatively minor and that by trying the five together, the government is bootstrapping to implicate him in more serious allegations against the others. In an interview

, Ruiz explained, [We] want Mr. al Hawsawi to be judged based on the evidence against him—to have individualized justice. That's very difficult when you have a group setting. We're very concerned ultimately about a fact finder being able to separate one piece of evidence against one person from one piece of evidence against another person, and not having that spill-over prejudice—the birds-of-a-feather and flock mentality, which is

obviously what the prosecution wants to exploit and why they're fighting hard to keep it as a joint trial.

The other teams, to varying degrees, have prioritized the quest for more information about their clients' years as ghost detainees in CIA custody. But everyone on the defense side agreed that the release of the FBI documents and the proceedings that week were a game changer. As James Harrington, learned counsel for Ramzi bin al-Shibh, said, it was the "first time there were warm bodies in the witness seat." The warm bodies were FBI Special Agents Abigail Perkins (now retired) and James Fitzgerald, who interrogated al-Hawsawi in January 2007. FBI Memos as Snapshots of History

Two FBI memos provide snapshots of the rise and fall of the US torture program. The first, dated May 19, 2004, begins with a synopsis: In light of the widely publicized abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison, Iraq, this [memo] reiterates and memorializes existing FBI policy with regard to the interrogation of prisoners, detainees, or persons under United States control (collectively "detainees"). These guidelines serve as a reminder of existing FBI policy that has consistently provided that FBI personnel may not obtain statements during interrogations by the use of force, threats, physical abuse, threats of such abuse or severe physical conditions.

On the second page of the two-page document, a bolded and underlined sentence reads: "FBI personnel shall not participate in any treatment or use any interrogation technique that is in violation of these [1997] guidelines..."

"If such treatment occurs, they must remove themselves, even "[i]f a co-interrogator is complying with the rules of his or her own agency..."

That memo, produced three weeks after the Abu Ghraib photos became public, was a prescient bet that the Bush administration's authorization of violent and coercive interrogation tactics was about to explode, and the FBI wanted to be on record—at least to itself, since the memo was not public—that its hands were "clean." The implication was that the hands of other government agencies had been soiled by the torture and abuse of detainees. Indeed, the pressure created by the Abu Ghraib scandal forced the Bush administration to begin releasing some information about the highly classified interrogation and detention operations in the "war on terror"; the first documents to become public in June 2004 exposed the torture-permissive rationales produced by Justice Department lawyers to provide the CIA with legal cover for techniques they were using on "High Value Detainees" (HVDs) at black sites in foreign countries. These "torture memos," as they were instantly and aptly described, intensified the scandal triggered by

the photos. Later that June, the Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling in *Rasul v. Bush*

that people at Guantánamo could not be indefinitely deprived of the habeas corpus right to challenge their detention. This was the first judicial rebuke of the Bush administration's claim that these prisoners had no rights.

Prior to *Rasul*, Guantánamo had been an ideal venue for long-term military detention because prisoners were held incommunicado. The CIA had offloaded a few HVDs who, they determined, were no longer sources of "actionable intelligence." However, in the spring of 2004, the CIA repossessed those HVDs and moved them to black sites in other locales. Related Articles

The second FBI document, dated January 10, 2007, reflects the ramifications of another landmark Supreme Court decision, the June 2006 ruling in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*

that all prisoners in US custody—which would include those held by the CIA—had, at minimum, the rights enshrined in Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the so-called "humanitarian baseline." These include the right not to be tortured or subjected to "outrages on human dignity." *Hamdan* demolished whatever assurances the Bush administration had provided to the CIA that the people they held would never see the light of day, and that the things done to them would remain top secret forever. As former vice president Dick Cheney later explained, the CIA program had never been intended to build a case for prosecution: "Intelligence officers of the United States were not...trying to get terrorists to confess to past killings; they were trying to prevent future killings." Enter the Clean Teams

The FBI was the government's solution to the conundrum of how to elicit incriminating statements from people who had been disappeared and tortured for years. The January 2007 memo lays out the procedures for clean teams to interview people recently transferred from black sites. The memo instructs the agents: "No statement made by a detainee while that detainee was in the custody of an intelligence agency, or any evidence obtained as a result of such statement will be used in an interview unless approved in advance by the assigned prosecutor and the appropriate intelligence agencies."

In describing how such interviews shall be conducted, the memo advises that the MCA does not require Miranda warnings to be given to people during interrogation, but nevertheless the FBI agents should determine that anything the detainee says is freely given and not coerced. If the detainee asks for an attorney, the agent should inform him that, because he has not (yet) been charged with a crime, he has no such right. The

agents should also make clear that the detainee's circumstances have changed, for example by stating that they "do not work for and are independent of any organization that previously held" him and "that he will not be returning to the control of any of his previous custodians."

The official rhetoric about the clean-team process goes as follows: Whatever happened to these men before they were transferred to Guantánamo is over but nevertheless remains classified. Whatever statements they made during their time in CIA custody will not be used by military-commission prosecutors. Whatever statements they made to FBI clean-team agents is court-worthy by virtue of the conduct of interrogations using conventional and lawful means.

The implications of this rhetoric depend on two presumptions: that the FBI was institutionally separate from the CIA and had not dirtied its hands by colluding in torture, and that time itself could be separated between torture time and post-torture time. Thus, the FBI was tasked not just with producing clean evidence but also with assisting in the whitewashing of the present as post-torture time.

Yet this notion of separation, institutional and temporal, was belied by the contents of the second memo, which confirmed that the CIA retains significant control over the HVDs

now imprisoned at Guantánamo. This includes control over their own memories and recollections of their treatment in black sites. According to the memo, any information that may come up during the FBI interview about interrogation techniques or black-site locations, "even though coming from a detainee, is deemed by the CIA to be national security information."

The CIA's control extended to the clean-team interrogations. FBI agents were instructed to produce a "letterhead memorandum [LHM] prepared on a CIA-supplied laptop." A footnote then states: "Allegations of misconduct will not

be included in this LHM" (emphasis in original). It also instructs the agents to submit the LHM and their interrogation notes to the CIA for classification review. The for-public-consumption illusion of institutional separation is contradicted by the concept of "compartmented information," which engulfs anything pertaining to torture. "If the CIA determines that compartmented information is contained in the LHM, the interviewing agent should create a separate LHM." Warm Bodies and State Secrets

The December 2017 hearings involving testimony from the two FBI agents began with the prosecution, which presented a compelling array of evidence about financial dealings between al-Hawsawi and some of the

9/11 hijackers. When it was Ruiz's turn to cross-examine Agent Perkins, she testified that during her January 2007 meetings with al-Hawsawi, he spoke freely and acknowledged his role in the 9/11 plot

. She said he never mentioned any abuse by the CIA and she never asked. Perkins's affect on the stand was a blend of matter-of-fact professionalism and uninquisitiveness. She didn't know then and doesn't know now much about al-Hawsawi's abusive treatment in black sites. When Ruiz asked what she knew about his capture in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, in March 2003, Judge Pohl warned her not to reveal classified information in open court. This was a pointed reminder that all details about al-Hawsawi from the moment he was taken into US custody until the time he was transferred to Guantánamo in 2006 are state secrets.

When Ruiz questioned Perkins about how she interrogated al-Hawsawi, she explained that she did so without an interpreter, a point that Ruiz bore down on because his client is not fluent in English. When Ruiz asked whether the interrogation was taped, she said no because the CIA ground rules prohibited it.

The bombshell in Perkins's testimony was that she reviewed CIA black-site cables to prepare questions and strategies for her interrogation. While this black-site leakage into the process to obtain court-worthy evidence was not surprising to Ruiz or the other defense teams, putting it on record in open court undermined the pretense of separation between CIA torture and the FBI clean teams.

At a press conference in the Guantánamo media center at the end of the week, Alka Pradhan, who had worked for the human-rights organization Reprieve before joining the team representing al-Baluchi, described the implications of Perkins's testimony: "Torture-derived evidence affects every part of this process. In no court of law would the 2007 statements be permitted." James Connell, al-Baluchi's learned counsel, added, "Torture isn't a single event, it was a program." The Tangle of Conflicting Interests

Torture lies at the center of the impossible tangle of conflicting interests in the 9/11 case. The CIA's interest is the protection of its secret "sources and methods," not prosecution, let alone due process. As the original classification authority (OCA) of black-site-related information, the CIA has the power to determine what kinds of information the defense teams "need to know," and it exercises this power by deciding what is or is not discoverable. The prosecutors are tasked with guarding the CIA's secrets and enforcing the need-to-know determinations, which they do zealously. Because the defense teams have access to some classified information about the CIA's torture program, they are

regarded with suspicion as weak links in the chain of secrecy, and this has led to multiple instances of governmental monitoring and spying

. Several years ago, the case against Ramzi bin al-Shibh was nearly derailed

when the defense teams learned that the FBI had tried to turn some non-lawyer members into informants and had succeeded in recruiting several people on learned counsel Harrington's team

. Although the prosecutors had no role in these spy operations, as the government's representatives they have had to argue, repeatedly, that the case is not too damaged to proceed.

The conflicts of interest escalated precipitously in recent months as a result of new and heightened restrictions prosecutors have imposed on the defense teams' prerogatives to conduct their own investigations. These restrictions include the prohibition to independently contact any person who may have been associated with the CIA program, with the exception of the handful of people whose roles are now public information. Prosecutors also wanted to restrict defense team members' travel to countries that hosted black sites because this could be deemed to confirm classified information, despite the fact that this knowledge is publicly available through journalistic and human-rights organizations' reporting and international lawsuits. During the January 2018 hearings, the chief prosecutor, General Mark Martins, defended the restrictions as a national security necessity: "The mere seeking of interviews with people—and wandering up and ambushing people at the Piggly Wiggly—is a serious thing

." He castigated the defense teams for trying to become their own "private attorney general, or whatever disembodied investigative authority they think they have outside the commission."

The defense teams contend that these restrictions impede their ability and infringe upon their legally mandated duty to defend their clients and, therefore, put them into an ethical quandary. Moreover, the teams are acutely aware that if the government suspects that they in any way reveal or mishandle classified information, they may be subject to prosecution under the Intelligence Identities Protection Act or the Espionage Act. The Pitched Battle for Discovery

Over the years, the prosecution has given the defense teams about 17,000 pages of summaries and substitutions of the millions of pages of original CIA materials; the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) had access to the original materials to produce its report on the RDI program, but only a redacted executive summary of this report is available to the

public—or to the defense teams. Recently, the prosecution also gave the defense an RDI timeline, which is supposed to reflect and contextualize the summaries and substitutions.

The hearing on March 1, 2018, put the stakes of the long-running battle over discovery on full display. Pradhan had spent more than a month poring over the prosecution-provided materials and comparing that information to open-source materials, including the SSCI report's executive summary. She took the podium to argue that the flaws and gaps were so great that the defense teams must be able to access the original documents to do their own assessments. Setting the stage for what would follow, she said, "Torture is—Your Honor...the nasty center of this case, whether we like it or not, and we have to deal with it at some point."

Pradhan began by describing the contradictions in the prosecutors' positions: First, that the defense has some hysterical obsession with our client's state-sponsored torture, as if it didn't have a direct bearing on their death penalty trial; and second, they wring their hands that they have done all they can to give us all of the relevant documents in their possession, but with the caveat that they have, of course, masked some of the most sensitive information because they are the guardians of national security information and we are not to be trusted.... The government is here carrying that water for the CIA in denying that information not to the public, but to top secret security clearance holding defense counsel.

To illustrate the deficiencies in materials provided to the defense, Pradhan contrasted the publicly available chronology of Gul Rahman's month-long detention at a black site in Afghanistan (code named "COBALT") before he died (of exposure) in 2002, which is three pages long, with the classified chronology of her client, al-Baluchi's, three-and-a-half-year detention at multiple black sites, which is one-quarter of a page.

Judge Pohl asked Pradhan if she was asking him to reconsider the summaries he had approved (under the MCA, which governs this system, the defense has no right to ask for reconsideration). She replied, "No, sir. I'm asking you to compel the government to provide us all the original documents." Judge Pohl asked, "How is that not a reconsideration?" This exchange exposed one dimension of the larger conflict: If the CIA-directed, prosecution-provided discovery is incomplete or inaccurate, yet has been approved by the judge, the defense must essentially persuade the court why it needs the originals to obtain "granular" details. Pradhan explained, "Mr. al-Baluchi's recollections of his own torture, while they may be helpful, are not reliable precisely because of his torture over a lengthy period of

time." Pradhan concluded by drawing the judge's attention to the recently exposed collaboration between the FBI and the CIA, which "is relevant and material" to the 2007 clean-team interrogations and the government's case. "So at a minimum, the government has spent nearly six years since the arraignment, frankly, wasting our time."

Jeffrey Groharing, one of the prosecutors, took the podium to defend the discovery process. "There was no intentional wrongdoing, no obfuscation, no information intentionally stripped, and the summaries are not, in any way grotesquely misleading." He described the request for original materials as an "extreme remedy," and urged the judge to reject it. Taking Pradhan's example of the blurring of dates in the timeline, he explained that it was necessary "to protect classified information." Then he offered what was intended to be an assuaging statement: "The original classification authority... yesterday, issued guidance that would allow additional dates to be provided in certain materials, not all dates."

Cheryl Bormann, learned counsel for Walid bin al-Attash (aka Khallad bin al-Attash), took her turn at the podium, highlighting the vast gap between the discovery expectations of experienced death-penalty lawyers and the process unfolding in this case: [I]f this were any other court and I had a detective on the stand...or a special agent from the FBI, and I needed to go into what happened to my client during a 36-hour interrogation, and I had [information that was] riddled with mistakes, my argument to the jury would later be that they can't believe anything that FBI agent says because that FBI agent is so careless in his duties that everything that he says should be subject to being found unreliable by the trier of fact. And so here we have the same thing.

What if, asked David Nevin, learned counsel for Mohammed, the "information we receive...about the locations of the torture" comes from our clients? Groharing responded that information from the client "can be determined to be classified when held by counsel." Connell retorted: "That is absolutely untrue.... The government has never produced a single shred of authority...for the proposition that people who were simply abducted by the United States...can be the custodians of classified information."

Connell and Judge Pohl had an exchange about the purposes that detailed information about torture would serve in this trial. Connell explained that it was pertinent not only to the sentencing phase to seek an alternative to execution if the men are found guilty (i.e., mitigation) but also to the guilt-or-innocence phase to try to suppress statements the clients made to FBI agents as torture-tainted—in legal terms, "fruit of the poisonous tree." Pohl interjected, "[C]orrect me if I'm wrong here,

[but] you're making the assumption that your [motion to suppress government evidence against your client will fail]." Connell: "Yes, sir. I am." Pohl: "Okay. But if your suppression motion were to succeed...?" Connell: "Wow." Pohl: "[Y]ou know, the judges can rule both ways." Connell: "So I hear." A Capital Mess

The conflicts of interest, from the defense teams' perspectives, could go a long way toward being resolved if the government made a choice: Either prioritize the CIA's secrets and take the death penalty off the table, or continue to seek the death penalty and respect the adversarial process by enabling the defense to access more information about the torture program—including, for example, the full SSCI report. The prosecutors reject the notion that they must make such a politically unpalatable choice. The secrets, as Groharing explained, are "the most highly classified information that the government has.... [I]t's extremely important that we protect that information." But, he insisted, that doesn't force a choice because the defense teams already have enough information to "paint a very vivid picture...and they have the accused [who are] the best source of information about their experiences in the RDI program." Moreover, the prosecution will not contest whatever vivid picture the defense wishes to present at trial, as long as it's tethered to reality. "We're not going to quibble. We're not going to call witnesses and debate about whether Mr. Mohammad was waterboarded 183 times or 283 times. We, frankly, think that has little relevance to the commission and the issues before it."

Harrington could barely contain his agitation. "[S]aying that we can get information from our clients and...that we should focus on the guilt or innocence part of the case and not the sentencing part...is total ignorance of what capital law is all about." He added that the prosecution has no right to "tell the court or us" how to defend our case. Moreover, the assertion that the defendants—whose torture continues to affect them profoundly—can be reliable sources of classified information "is just preposterous."

Nevin highlighted another paradox of the government's position, namely the notion that the defense should rely on open sources for black-site information. "It's only when I get lucky enough to have some NGO come forward and...develop the evidence... that I can kind of glom onto and use it as a stalking horse to get in the door to talk about conducting my [own] investigation."

Pradhan asserted, "[T]here is a straight line between what we're asking for"—the original documents—"and the evidence that the government is trying to use to execute Mr. al Baluchi." To illustrate the possible effects of the defendants' torture experiences on

subsequent statements to the FBI, Pradhan offered an example from one short period of al-Baluchi's time in the black sites. Reading from a declassified report (exhibit number is AE 114FF), she said that, prior to his interrogation on May 20, 2003, he "had been kept naked in the standing, sleep-deprivation position since his initial interrogation session on 17 May 2003." She continued reading: al-Baluchi "was significantly fatigued during this session.... His resistance posture had begun to decline. He appears to be answering questions truthfully. He was presented naked for this session. He was allowed to sit in reward for his increased cooperation.... In any case, he was able to complete the interview successfully despite the sleepiness that he exhibited." Quoting a CIA psychologist, she said, al-Baluchi "is still developing a sense of learned helplessness which is contributing to his compliance, and the team will continue to lessen the intensity of the interrogation sessions relative to [his] cooperation." Pradhan then explained the long-term consequences of this treatment by citing the declarations of two neuroscientists that "memory is changed by torture...brain function is changed by torture."

One outcome of this hearing was a concession by the government that the defense has a legitimate need to know more about the relationship between the FBI and the CIA between 2002 and 2007. A memo dated April 27, 2018, states: "The prosecution is aware of your claim that the five accused were not acting voluntarily in making statements to the FBI agents in 2007.... in addition we are aware of your claim...that the statements...are 'derived from torture.'" The memo contains a pledge to disclose relevant information, although to date no new material has been provided. The Illusion of Post-Torture Time

During the most recent hearings, on May 1, 2018, Gary Sowards, one of Mohammed's attorneys, asked Judge Pohl to issue an emergency order to keep the MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) machine at Guantánamo. The machine had been shipped in the previous October

and brain scans had been performed on the defendants. Now, the defense teams were concerned that it would be shipped off before they made further use of it. Sowards explained that the Navy MRI technician had performed only 25 percent of the requested tests on his client. Yet even these limited results seem to indicate that Mohammed has suffered brain damage.

If Mohammed's brain damage is validated by further tests, it could be grounds for challenging the death-penalty option. Moreover, brain damage resulting from being waterboarded and having his head bashed into walls numerous times while in CIA custody could bolster defense motions to dismiss the case on the

grounds of outrageous government conduct. Because brain damage is a permanent condition, it provides a rather literal example of what Jean Améry, a survivor of Nazi torture, wrote, "Whoever was tortured stays tortured."

Unlike Mohammed, who appears to be high-functioning, Ramzi bin al-Shibh's fragile mental condition has roiled his case for years; in 2014, Judge Pohl unilaterally severed him from the others, but then reversed his decision. Bin al-Shibh has alleged, repeatedly, that his torture is ongoing in Guantánamo's super-secret Camp 7 where he and the other HVDs are housed. Specifically, he claims that guards bombard him with "noises and vibrations" to keep him unsettled and unable to sleep, a continuation of the sleep deprivation to which he was subjected in the black sites. One of the ironies of the classification regime that prevails at Guantánamo is the limited ability of his lawyers to investigate conditions in Camp 7 to determine whether bin al-Shibh is experiencing the things he claims or whether his claims are the hallucinatory product of a torture-tainted imagination. Because of his persisting protests about his current conditions of confinement, he is often disciplined by his jailors for being "non-compliant."

In the weeks prior to the most recent hearings, bin al-Shibh was subjected to intensified discipline that echoed his previous treatment in CIA custody. He was put into an isolation cell with a half-inch rubber pad for a mattress, a Quran, and nothing else. He could not bring his legal materials even though he had hearings approaching, and he had to process his mail and responses within an hour. Bin al-Shibh claims that members of the Camp 7 guard force and medical staff taunted him and threatened to move him to a padded cell or even to send him back to the black sites. In protest because of the guards' failure to follow standard operating procedures and to comply with the judge's order to stop the harassing noises and vibrations, he went on hunger strike. He was then told he could be force-fed if his health declines. According to Harrington, this experience severely retraumatized bin al-Shibh and badly undermined his relationship with his attorneys. Harrington said, "This week was one of the deepest valleys I've ever been in with my client." The damage, he added, may never be repaired because bin al-Shibh is so vulnerable and frustrated and his team seems unable to help him.

The confluence of recent developments at Guantánamo illustrates that torture is not a thing of the past for the men on trial or for the attorneys who represent them. Pradhan's insistence that torture is the "nasty center of this case"—a position shared by some

of the other teams—is exasperating to the prosecutors, who insist that the real crime—the mass murders on 9/11—is being sidelined in the tussle over discovery. These unresolved and bitter conflicts over how this case should proceed make the prospect of a start date for the trial increasingly dim. This endlessness renders new meaning to the billing of the 9/11 case as "the trial of the century."

Dearborn Man Suspected Of Being ISIS Fighter

By Ann Zaniewski

[Detroit Free Press](#), July 19, 2018

A 28-year-old man from Dearborn was arrested in Syria earlier this month on suspicion of being a fighter for the Islamic State.

Ibraheem Musaibli was seized as he tried to escape the Middle Euphrates River Valley, an area where the American-backed Syrian Democratic Forces has been trying to squash remaining pockets of Islamic State control, the New York Times reported Thursday.

The newspaper reported that authorities are working to bring Musaibli and an Indiana woman whose husband was an Islamic State fighter back to the U.S. to be prosecuted. He is being held in an undisclosed facility.

A spokesman for the FBI in Detroit declined to comment.

Seamus Hughes, a terrorism expert and deputy director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, told the Free Press that Musaibli's arrest is significant.

"We have had a number of Americans who have been captured in Syria, Iraq, or Turkey fleeing the Islamic State," he said in an e-mail. "Most end up charged with federal crimes.

More on Freep.com:

"Mr. Musaibli is interesting because this is the first time with the use of federal courts for such a case under the Trump administration. There is an ongoing debate within the administration about what to do with returning foreign fighters with some sections advocating for federal courts while others encouraging the use of military courts."

Hughes said if Musaibli is indicted, the next steps would be to unseal the indictment and bring him to Michigan in front of a federal judge.

The New York Times reported that officials believe Musaibli traveled to Syria in 2015. It also said he dropped out of high school as a teen and helped his dad run a perfume store before starting his own family and moving to Yemen.

The Times reached out through Facebook to Musaibli's brother, who expressed disbelief at the idea that Musaibli would have joined ISIS.

"My brother is a saint," Abe Musaibli told the Times. "He wouldn't hurt a fly."

Staff writer Tresa Baldas contributed to this report. Contact staff writer Ann Zaniewski at 313-222-6594 or azaniewski@freepress.com. Follow her on Twitter: @AnnZaniewski.

Jury Discharged In Old Bailey Terror Case

[BBC News Online \(UK\)](#), July 19, 2018

A jury has failed to reach a verdict on a man accused of telling undercover officers he wanted fight in Libya.

Mohammed Aqib Imran, 22, from Birmingham, denies preparing for acts of terrorism by seeking help to reach Islamic State group fighters abroad.

The Old Bailey heard he had allegedly contacted IS commanders online – but was really speaking to the FBI and MI5.

Imran was convicted of a lesser charge of possessing a "guidebook" for mujahideen fighters living in the West.

But after a five-week trial, the jury were unable to reach a verdict on the more serious offence, and have now been discharged.

His co-accused, Naa'imur Rahman, 20, was convicted of preparing to attack Downing Street in the hope of killing the prime minister.

Rahman, originally from Walsall but most recently homeless in London, asked an undercover team for help with explosives for an attack and walked away with a fake bomb following an elaborate sting.

Mr Justice Haddon-Cave told Rahman that when he returns to court on 31 August he should expect a lengthy sentence.

The judge paid tribute to the police officers who investigated Rahman, saying: "It has been a model... and reassuring for the public how this remarkable investigation has been conducted."

Iran-backed Yemen Rebels Expose Limits Of U.S. Strategy

By Carlo Muñoz

[Washington Times](#), July 19, 2018

Iran-backed militant control over key areas of Yemen, despite a blistering assault by U.S.-backed Saudi and Emirati military forces, has sent a difficult message to Washington: Arab powers armed with American weaponry and targeting intelligence isn't going to be enough to crush Tehran's armed proxies around the Middle East.

The White House must grapple with this reality as it pushes Gulf Arab allies to play a central role in carrying out President Trump's promise to confront and rein in Iranian meddling in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen, regional analysts say.

The limits of Washington's approach, some national security sources say, are clearest in Yemen, where Saudi and Emirati forces launched a relentless assault last month on the strategic port city of Hodeidah that was supposed to deal a backbreaking blow to the Iran-backed Houthi insurgency.

With the offensive now stalled and the Houthis still in control of Hodeidah, as well as other key territory, the Iranians are savoring a small victory against Mr. Trump — or at least rejoicing in the fact that Saudi Arabian air raids alone seem incapable of ending Tehran's support for proxies in Yemen.

"The Saudis believed they could reverse the Houthis' momentum" through unrivaled air power, mostly supplied from U.S. weapons makers, said Gerald Feierstein, who served as U.S. ambassador to Yemen from 2010 to 2013.

Although Riyadh and its allies did not assume that the fight against the Houthis would be easy when the campaign began in 2015, "there was no expectation the campaign would reach its fourth year, which it has," Mr. Feierstein, now the director of Gulf affairs at the Middle East Institute, told The Washington Times in an interview this week.

Saudi and Emirati-flagged warplanes built by U.S. defense firms have devastated Houthi-dominated redoubts along Yemen's western coastline for the past four years as part of a Saudi-led, but tacitly U.S.-backed, campaign.

Riyadh is accused of engaging in heavy-handed tactics, which rights groups claim have included the use of cluster bombs banned under international rules of war. But the campaign has failed to dislodge the Houthis from their strongholds in Yemen and has initiated one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

In the interim, said senior Middle East analyst Katherine Zimmerman at the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute, "there was a strategic miscalculation on the strength of the [Saudi] air campaign and whether the Houthis would fold."

Ms. Zimmerman, who works with the institute's Critical Threats Project, told The Times this week that Saudi and Emirati commanders assumed their "Blitzkrieg attacks" would at least bring the Houthis toward a capitulation at the negotiating table. "What we saw instead," she said, "was their resolve strengthening."

Since assuming office 18 months ago, the Trump administration has embraced an increasingly aggressive

policy toward the expansion of Iranian influence in the Middle East and beyond. The policy gained particular momentum with the president's decision in May to withdraw from the 2015 international nuclear accord that the Obama administration reached with Tehran.

The nuclear deal freed up billions of dollars for Iran through sanctions relief in exchange for closer monitoring of Iranian nuclear activities.

The decision to pull out of the accord was part of a larger Trump administration strategy to curtail Tehran-backed proxy militia activity that increased after the deal went into effect.

Analysts say the central tenet of the administration's approach is to provide both implicit and explicit support for U.S. allies battling Iranian proxy forces, such as the Houthis in Yemen.

U.S. military officials say Houthi militias have received direct support from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its Quds Force — the IRGC directorate specifically responsible for advising Shiite Muslim paramilitary forces in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and beyond.

"We do consider Iran to be the most destabilizing actor across the region," Gen. Joseph Votel, U.S. Central Command chief, told reporters Thursday. "It is Iran who is supporting the Houthis, who are launching extended-range missiles against major population centers in Saudi Arabia."

The four-star general said the Houthis are also responsible for "blocking the proper distribution of humanitarian aid and critical medicines to address one of the largest outbreaks of cholera on record in the world."

The blockade of humanitarian aid through the port city of Hodeidah has emerged as a disturbing element of the narrative around Yemen's cholera outbreak, which the International Committee of the Red Cross said soared to 1 million cases last year.

Further complicating the dynamics in Yemen, officials at the United Nations warned during the lead-up of the Saudi-led military offensive in Hodeidah that the assault might worsen the cholera crisis. Reports during the weeks since have highlighted how thousands of people have been forced to flee clashes in the port city.

The situation has not appeared to dampen the Trump administration's strategy of taking the fight to the Iran-backed militants.

During a NATO summit last week, Mr. Trump suggested that the U.S. is poised to escalate its efforts to rein in Tehran and its proxies. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urged American allies to take further steps to degrade Iranian influence around the world.

"There's no telling when Iran may try to foment terrorism, violence and instability in one of our countries

next," Mr. Pompeo said on Twitter. "Iran's regime wants to start trouble wherever it can. It's our responsibility to stop it."

Despite the administration's eagerness, the complexities in Yemen continue to cast a shadow over the viability of Washington's strategy.

Breaking the stalemate

Ms. Zimmerman, who traveled through Saudi-led coalition controlled areas of Yemen in March, said the front lines have essentially ossified in what had been a volatile and fast-moving conflict between Houthi separatists and Yemeni government forces aligned with Riyadh.

During the initial years after the fall of Yemen's capital city of Sanaa into Houthi hands in 2014, neither the Saudis nor the United Arab Emirates had been willing to throw the full weight of their ground forces into the conflict, Ms. Zimmerman said.

Alternatively, she said, the Arab coalition relied on bombing raids by fighter jets to try to influence the situation on the ground.

The June campaign to retake the Port of Hodeidah and the surrounding city signaled a major change in tactics by the Saudi-led campaign. It marked the first major ground offensive against the Houthis by Saudi and Emirati-led forces in recent years.

The majority of coalition ground troops are reported to be Emirati special operations forces as well as conventional troops leading a patchwork of other allied forces. The Saudis appear reluctant to send ground forces into Yemen out of concern that their presence could result in a repeat of a 2009 misadventure known as Operation Scorched Earth, which resulted in the deaths of more than 130 Saudi soldiers.

"The Saudis went 'all in' to Yemen in 2009 and they lost," said Ms. Zimmerman. "They are wary of that."

While that hangs in the backdrop of a lull in fighting in Hodeidah, Mr. Feierstein said, the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition may be eager to find a diplomatic solution to end the war in Yemen.

"The coalition is not pressing the offensive," he said, suggesting that Riyadh wants to give the United Nations "time to use the advances [that coalition forces] have made so far to get to a political process."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in February named British diplomat Martin Griffiths as the U.N. special envoy to Yemen. Mr. Griffiths has since spearheaded an effort to reach a power-sharing deal over Hodeidah between the Houthis and the Riyadh-aligned Yemeni government.

"Whether Hodeidah is a window of opportunity to get you there is up for debate," said Mr. Feierstein. "[But]

this is a moment that political initiatives should be pursued.”

For the Houthis, he said, “the time has come to maximize their own gains into political action.”

But it remains to be seen how the Houthis will play the situation. Reports late Thursday said separatist leader Abdel Malek Al-Houthi had told a French newspaper that he is prepared to hand over to the United Nations control of Hodeidah if the Saudis and Emiratis halt their offensive on the city.

The reports could not be confirmed immediately, but they came a day after Mr. Griffiths and Reem Al Hashimy, United Arab Emirates minister of state for international cooperation, held talks in Washington over the prospect of a deal over control of Hodeidah.

“We are very keen on the special envoy role to put forward a peace plan for Yemen,” Ms. Al Hashimy told reporters after the meeting. “We feel he is on to something that may help us to develop a framework that would help Yemen as a whole.”

NATIONAL SECURITY NEWS

Justice Department Will Now Notify Public Of Foreign Election Hacking

By Jeff Mordock

[Washington Times](#), July 19, 2018

The Justice Department announced on Thursday it will now notify the public of foreign hacking operations targeting U.S. elections, a new policy implemented in the wake of Russia’s efforts to interfere with the 2016 Presidential campaign.

Under the new policy, the government will inform companies, organizations and individuals they suspect are under a cyber attack by foreign operatives seeking to disrupt elections.

In the wake of a cyber attack, the Justice Department will now “alert the victims and unwitting targets of foreign influence activities when appropriate and consistent with the Department’s policies and practices.”

Although the Justice Department conceded it may not be “possible or prudent” to inform victims in certain contexts. It also said it will only publicly disclose threats when it attributes a cyberattack to a foreign government “with high confidence.”

The Justice Department reported the policy shift in the first report by its new Cyber-Digital Task Force.

The report was released just three days after President Trump’s summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin and nearly a week after Deputy Attorney

General Rod Rosenstein announced the indictment of 12 Russians accused of election meddling.

Furthermore, the report said the Justice Department must remain aware of efforts by foreign nations to interfere in American politics, noting that Russia has been meddling in the U.S. since the 1980s.

“The Russian effort to influence the 2016 presidential election is just one tree in a growing forest,” Mr. Rosenstein said announcing the report’s contents.

On Thursday, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, called Russia the most aggressive actor when it comes to cyber attacks, but added there may be multiple foreign influences attempting to undermine the U.S. elections.

In the report, the Justice Department vowed to “aggressively investigate and prosecute foreign influence cases and promised to work with other agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security to share information about threats.

Justice Department Plans To Alert Public To Foreign Operations Targeting U.S. Democracy

By Ellen Nakashima

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

The Justice Department plans to alert the public to foreign operations targeting U.S. democracy under a new policy designed to counter hacking and disinformation campaigns such as the one Russia undertook in 2016 to disrupt the presidential election.

The government will inform American companies, private organizations and individuals that they are being covertly attacked by foreign actors attempting to affect elections or the political process.

“Exposing schemes to the public is an important way to neutralize them,” said Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, who announced the policy at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado, according to prepared remarks. “The American people have a right to know if foreign governments are targeting them with propaganda.”

The Obama administration struggled in 2016 to decide whether and when to disclose the existence of the Russian intervention, fearing that it would be portrayed as a partisan move. Concerns about appearing to favor the Democratic presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, weighed on President Obama, who was reluctant to give then-GOP-nominee Donald Trump ammunition for his accusation that the election was rigged.

“If this disclosure requirement had been around in 2016, I firmly believe that it would have served as a

meaningful deterrent after Russia's interference was first discovered, and it would have informed voters more quickly and more forcefully that a foreign government was trying to affect their vote," said Rep. Adam B. Schiff (D-Calif.), who two years ago pressed the Obama administration to call out Russia's activities.

Rosenstein said the Russian effort to influence the 2016 election "is just one tree in a growing forest. Focusing merely on a single election misses the point."

He cited Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats, who last Friday said Russia's actions have continued. "As Director Coats made clear, these actions are persistent, they are pervasive, and they are meant to undermine America's democracy on a daily basis, regardless of whether it is election time or not," Rosenstein said.

At the Aspen Forum on Thursday, a Microsoft executive said that Russian military intelligence, known as the GRU, has targeted at least three candidates running for election this year. Tom Burt, the company's vice president for customer security and trust, said that his team had discovered a spear-phishing campaign targeting the candidates. Spear-phishing is a technique hackers use to trick victims into clicking on malware-laced links in emails that enable access to the victims' computers.

Twelve GRU officers were charged last week by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III with conspiracy for their role in the hacking of the Democratic National Committee and the transfer of thousands of emails to the anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks, which published them at key moments in the campaign.

Pressure has been building on the Trump administration to commit to informing the public, with lawmakers debating passage of a similar requirement that would give it the force of law.

"It's absolutely crucial that the intelligence community lean forward, push the envelope on sharing as much of that information as possible, because one of the biggest challenges we have is on education of the public, of the electorate, on foreign, read Russian-influence operations," said former director of national intelligence James R. Clapper Jr., who last year at Aspen called for such transparency.

He called the move "quite significant" and said "making that a standard policy across the government is a good one." Other agencies, he said, "will take a cue" from the Justice Department, which is part of the intelligence community and receives information from spy agencies.

The policy, which is part of a report issued on a new Cyber Digital Task Force, set up by Attorney General Jeff Sessions in February, also specifies that in

considering whether to disclose information, the department must protect intelligence sources and methods, investigations and other government operations.

"Partisan political considerations must play no role in efforts to alert victims, other affected individuals or the American public to foreign influence operations against the United States," the policy states. A foreign influence operation will be publicly disclosed "only when the government can attribute those activities to a foreign government with high confidence," it said.

Rosenstein noted that influence operations are not new. The Soviet Union used them against the United States throughout the 20th century, including in 1963, paying an American to distribute a book claiming that the FBI and the CIA assassinated President John F. Kennedy.

The new task force for the first time spelled out five types of threats covered under foreign influence operations.

Hackers can target election systems, trying to get into voter registration databases and voting machines. Foreign operatives can pursue political organizations, campaigns and public officials. They can offer to assist political organizations or campaigns, while concealing their links to foreign governments. They can seek to covertly influence public opinion and sow division through the use of social media and other outlets. And they can try to employ lobbyists, foreign media outlets and other foreign organizations to influence policymakers and the public.

"Public attribution of foreign influence operations can help to counter and mitigate the harm caused by foreign-government-sponsored disinformation," Rosenstein said. "When people are aware of the true sponsor, they can make better-informed decisions."

The task force works closely with the FBI, whose director, Christopher A. Wray, last year established a Foreign Influence Task Force to focus on the same issue. The Justice Department task force is broader, but includes as a key component foreign influence activities.

To counter foreign influence, the department will aggressively investigate and prosecute such activities, and will work with other departments, such as Homeland Security, to share information about threats and vulnerabilities with state and local election officials, political organizations and other potential victims so they can take measures to detect or prevent harm, the report said.

It also noted that the Justice Department supports other agencies' actions, such as financial or diplomatic sanctions and intelligence efforts. The department also is forming strategic relationships with social-media

providers to help them identify malign foreign influence activity.

U.S. Says It Will Alert Public To Foreign Influence Operations

By Chris Strohm

[Bloomberg News](#), July 19, 2018

The U.S. Justice Department is considering ways to alert the public to foreign efforts to influence Americans and U.S. elections as the threat from adversaries such as Russia “continues to grow,” Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said.

“Influence operations are a form of information warfare,” Rosenstein said during a speech Thursday at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado. “Covert propaganda and disinformation are among the primary weapons.”

Rosenstein’s comments came as the Justice Department released a 156-page report describing the department’s plans to respond to cybersecurity threats and, in particular, malign foreign influence operations. The report includes a new policy that the department will follow when deciding whether to make evidence public – and how much to make public.

“It may not be possible or prudent to disclose foreign influence operations in certain contexts because of investigative or operational considerations, or other constraints,” the report said. “In some circumstances, however, public exposure and attribution of foreign influence operations can be an important means of countering the threat and rendering those operations less effective.”

Elections provide “an attractive opportunity for foreign influence campaigns to influence our political processes,” Rosenstein said. The deputy attorney general cited comments by Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, who said last week that “the digital infrastructure that serves this country is literally under attack.” Malicious Influence Operations

The report of the Justice Department’s Cyber Digital Task Force identifies five categories of malicious influence operations, many of which appeared to address point-by-point findings by the American intelligence community about Russian activities during the 2016 election.

The categories cited in the report include hacking attacks on election infrastructure; covert and overt operations to harm or assist political organizations; and activities to manipulate public opinion or sow divisions.

Rosenstein, who last week announced the indictment of 12 Russians for election hacking just days before President Donald Trump and Russian President

Vladimir Putin met in Helsinki, cited Russian election meddling in 2016 as part of a long history of activities directed by Moscow.

“Russian intelligence officers did not stumble onto the ideas of hacking American computers and posting misleading messages because they had a free afternoon,” Rosenstein said. “It is what they do every day.”

The threat is increasing, he added, and getting more sophisticated.

“The internet and social media platforms allow foreign agents to spread misleading political messages while masquerading as Americans,” he said, adding that there is also a threat from government-controlled media outlets and paid lobbyists.

“People should be aware when lobbyists or media outlets are working for a foreign government so they can evaluate the source’s credibility,” the deputy attorney general said. “When respected figures offer opinions” on public policy issues “it may matter to know that they are taking guidance from a foreign nation.”

Rosenstein, who oversees Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation of Russian election interference, received a standing ovation when he came to the podium. He didn’t take questions from the audience afterward.

Beyond hacking and attacks on elections, the report also says the Justice Department should consider “whether legislation to address encryption (and all related service provider access) challenges should be pursued.” That appears to be a reference to law enforcement efforts to get companies including Apple Inc. to provide access to locked mobile phones.

— With assistance by Ben Brody

Russia Campaign ‘Just One Tree In A Growing Forest,’ Rosenstein Says

By Katie Benner

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

The Justice Department will crack down on agents who are working to advance foreign agendas in the United States, Rod J. Rosenstein, the deputy attorney general, said on Thursday as he warned of a growing Russian threat to the United States.

Influence operations undertaken by foreign governments “are a form of information warfare,” Mr. Rosenstein said in a speech at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado. “The Russian effort to influence the 2016 presidential election is just one tree in a growing forest.”

Mr. Rosenstein, whose remarks came as he delivered a report from the Justice Department’s

cyberdigital task force, said that the government would step up enforcement of laws governing foreign agents and inform victims when they had been targeted in influence schemes.

His speech followed a week in which Russian influence was once again shown to have a transformative impact on modern American political life.

Last Friday, Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel investigating Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, indicted 12 Russian intelligence officers for stealing and disseminating information from the Clinton campaign to influence the race.

On Monday, the Justice Department accused Maria Butina, a Russian who tried to broker a secret meeting between President Trump and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, with carrying out a secret plot to get Republican Party leaders to support pro-Russian policies.

Ms. Butina privately compared herself to a Soviet-era propagandist and used her personal connections with the National Rifle Association and religious organizations to further her goals.

"These actions are persistent, they are pervasive, and they are meant to undermine America's democracy on a daily basis, regardless of whether it is election time or not," Mr. Rosenstein said. "Russian intelligence officers did not stumble onto the ideas of hacking American computers and posting misleading messages because they had a free afternoon. It is what they do every day."

Mr. Rosenstein was one of a string of administration officials to speak at the forum — including Dan Coats, the director of national intelligence, and the homeland security secretary, Kirstjen Nielsen — who have addressed the growing threat posed by Russia.

Mr. Rosenstein said Russia has long used malign influence operations to attack the United States and other countries. In the 1960s, the Soviet Union paid an American citizen to spread rumors about the Kennedy assassination, and in the 1980s, it spread false stories that the Pentagon had created AIDS.

The goal of those campaigns was to exacerbate social divisions and undermine confidence in government institutions, Mr. Rosenstein said.

That theme surfaced again in February, when Mr. Mueller indicted 13 Russian citizens for using social media and other online outlets to polarize voters, spread false information and sow discord among voters ahead of a particularly rancorous election.

Russians took on the identities of American citizens and spread toxic and divisive messages about race, immigration and religion online to manipulate voters, prosecutors said.

The Justice Department report identified five types of foreign influence operations intended to harm the American political system, including attacks on voting infrastructure, theft and weaponization of data, secret assistance of politicians in damaging their opponents, the spreading of false information and propaganda, and unlawful lobbying efforts.

Nearly all of those efforts have been described in cases brought by Mr. Mueller and the Justice Department this year.

The cyberdigital task force was an effort that Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced days after Mr. Mueller indicted the 13 Russians. While Mr. Sessions said the task force would take a comprehensive look at all of the online threats facing the country, he said the department would prioritize efforts made to meddle in elections.

The report identified five categories of digital threats in addition to influence campaigns, including attacks on computer systems, data theft, cyberenabled fraud schemes, online harassment and extortion, and attacks on the nation's critical infrastructure.

The report also detailed some of the work that the department was undertaking to protect the United States from these attacks.

As part of a new policy, the department will tell individuals, businesses and organizations when a foreign government tries to target the United States and its democratic institutions.

The Obama administration knew for months before the 2016 election that Russia was trying to interfere in the race. But President Barack Obama worried that he would be perceived as tilting the scales toward Hillary Clinton if he revealed the plot.

Heading into the election, few if any Americans were aware that Russia had targeted them with propaganda, sought to suppress the vote or deliberately tried to hurt Mrs. Clinton's chances by leaking stolen information from her campaign, the Democratic National Committee and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

The report was written by lawyers from several parts of the Justice Department, among them the F.B.I., the national security division and the criminal division.

Justice Department Announces Strategy On Foreign Meddling In U.S. Elections, Including Alerting Public

By Christal Hayes

[USA Today](#), July 19, 2018

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein unveiled a 156-page report Thursday evening on cybersecurity

operations and a strategy moving forward on foreign actors influencing U.S. elections, including notifying the American public of attacks.

The report, which was part of an effort set up by Attorney General Jeff Sessions in February, focuses on the different types of cyberthreats and what the Justice Department and intelligence agencies are doing to counter these efforts, along with what it could be doing better.

The first chapter is dedicated to countering malign foreign influence operations, specifically when it comes to elections. Rosenstein, while announcing the report at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado, said Russian interference in the 2016 election was not going to be a one-time issue. It's something that has been happening for years and will continue to get worse with the advance of technology.

"The Russian effort to influence the 2016 presidential campaign is just one tree in a growing forest," he said. "Focusing merely on a single election misses the point."

The announcement of the report and Rosenstein's blunt remarks on Russia and election meddling come as the White House has struggled to control its message on the subject.

After President Donald Trump met on Monday with Russian President Vladimir Putin, he seemed to accept Russia's denial of meddling in the 2016 election. Two days later, Trump appeared to say he didn't believe Russia was still targeting the U.S., which the White House later attempted to clarify.

Rosenstein made it a point to emphasize foreign meddling in American politics was not a partisan issue but rather something that should trouble everyone.

"Covert propaganda disseminated by foreign agents is fundamentally different from domestic partisan wrangling," he said. "Influence operations are a form of information warfare. Covert propaganda and disinformation are the primary weapons."

He also took aim at criticism that foreigners charged with hacking and meddling, like those targeted in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation of Russian meddling, might never be prosecuted since they are unlikely to be extradited to the U.S. He said the charges act as deterrents and prevent suspects from traveling to some nations out of fear of extradition.

"People who thought they were safely under the protection of foreign governments when they committed crimes against America sometimes later find themselves in federal prisons," he said.

Among the revelations in the report compiled by the Justice Department's cyber digital task force:

- Officials plan to better notify victims of cyber targeting, including those hit by foreign powers. The report notes that since FBI and U.S. Attorney's offices are spread out across the nation, officials can notify individuals and companies, including technology companies, with somewhat ease. Rosenstein said "exposing schemes to the public is an important way to neutralize them."

- New criminal statutes might be needed to prosecute these crimes. The report details that the Department of Justice is "considering whether new criminal statutes" targeting foreign operations aimed at spreading misinformation and influencing public opinion might be necessary as technology evolves.

The announcement of the report came amid reports that several top cybersecurity officials within the bureau had resigned.

The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday that more than five top cybersecurity officials have tendered their resignation and others are expected to leave in the coming days.

Among those who left or are planning to leave the bureau, according to the newspaper:

- Scott Smith, the assistant director for the FBI's cyber division. He was appointed to the position in 2016 and has worked for the bureau since 1996.

- Howard Marshall, the deputy assistant director of the cyber division and Smith's right-hand. He also started in the position in 2016 and previously served as a special agent in charge in Kentucky.

- David Resch, who oversaw all criminal and cyber investigations around the globe. He served as executive director of the criminal, cyber, response and services branch and was appointed just three months ago.

- Carl Ghattas, who served as the executive assistant director of the National Security Branch at FBI headquarters and was appointed last year.

- Jeffrey Tricoli, who oversaw national cyber investigations and a task-force dedicated to Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

DOJ Cyber-Digital Task Force Report Outlines Plan To Combat Midterm Election Meddling, Other Electronic Threats

By Gregg Re

[Fox News](#), July 19, 2018

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein unveiled the first public report of the Department of Justice's Cyber-Digital Task Force at the Aspen Security Forum on Thursday, outlining a new policy for responding to foreign influence operations ahead of the midterm elections in November.

The task force, established by Attorney General Jeff Sessions in February, also focused on other cyberthreats facing the U.S., including attacks on infrastructure and privacy.

“Every day, malicious cyberactors infiltrate computers and accounts of individual citizens, businesses, the military and all levels of government,” Rosenstein said Thursday.

But, he added, “the Russian effort to influence the 2016 presidential election is just one tree in a growing forest. Focusing merely on a single election misses the point.”

The report comes just three days after President Trump’s meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, Finland, on Monday – a summit that drew bipartisan criticism when the president appeared to equivocate on whether he was certain that Russian agents had tried to meddle in the 2016 election.

Speaking on Fox News’ “Hannity” on Wednesday, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes suggested that the DOJ wants Republicans to lose the House in the midterm elections to take the heat off their oversight probe – and that the agency strategically times its actions to disrupt the administration.

“Every time something happens on one side where we find out a new revelation about what appears to be real problems in the FBI and DOJ with this investigation, all of a sudden, they drop an indictment,” Nunes charged.

The DOJ’s new guidelines for responding to attempts to meddle in elections by foreign actors, spelled out in the new report, call for public disclosure of detected meddling in limited circumstances.

“Foreign influence operations will be publicly identified as such only when the department can attribute those activities to a foreign government with high confidence,” the task force’s report reads. “Disinformation or other support or influence by unknown or domestic sources not acting on behalf of a foreign government is beyond the scope of this policy.”

The DOJ will also prioritize safeguarding U.S. intelligence sources and operational methods, the guidelines state.

When national security or criminal probes occur in relation to an election cycle, the policy reads, “the department must also be careful to adhere to longstanding policies regarding the timing of charges or taking overt investigative steps.”

In a statement, intelligence committee member Rep. Adam Schiff praised the new disclosure policy.

“If this disclosure requirement had been around in 2016, I firmly believe that it would have served as a meaningful deterrent after Russia’s interference was first

discovered, and would have informed voters more quickly and more forcefully that a foreign government was trying to affect their vote,” Schiff said.

In addition to the new election meddling policy, the DOJ task force prescribes ways to confront other cyberthreats, including attacks on critical infrastructure like power grids.

“The department encourages key organizations, particularly critical infrastructure owners and operators, to identify and form relationships with personnel in their local FBI field office, including through the partnerships detailed above, before an incident occurs,” the report reads.

Earlier in the day at the Aspen forum, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats warned attendees of a ‘cyber-911’ and speculated that attacks on the power grid, or on major banks and Wall Street, could cripple the country.

Rosenstein told attendees at the Aspen forum that the DOJ’s work is part of a continuing mission.

“Our adversaries will never relent in their efforts to undermine America, so we must remain eternally vigilant in the defense of liberty, and the pursuit of justice,” he said.

Rosenstein took no questions after his speech – a break from normal protocol at the Aspen forum.

Gregg Re is an editor for Fox News. Follow him on Twitter @gregg_re.

Justice Department Unveils Strategy To Fight Election Meddling, Cybercrime

For the first time, DOJ describes how it will respond to influence plots like Russia’s interference in the 2016 presidential race.

By Eric Geller

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

The Justice Department on Thursday issued a wide-ranging report describing the cyber threats facing the United States and the department’s tactics for investigating, disrupting and deterring those risks.

Most significantly, the report contains the first public description of how the DOJ will assess and respond to foreign influence operations like Russia’s 2016 election meddling.

“That policy reflects an effort to articulate neutral principles so that when the issue that the government confronted in 2016 arises again — as it surely will — there will be a framework to address it,” Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said in unveiling the report at the Aspen Security Forum.

The report also describes a range of challenges hampering the government’s ability to fight more

traditional cybercrime and recommends possible solutions.

The challenge that receives the most attention is encryption and other technological impediments to accessing investigative data. The spread of easy-to-use, often-invisible encryption “poses a significant impediment to the investigation of most types of criminal activity,” the report warns.

For years, the government has urged tech companies to voluntarily use warrant-compatible encryption, but in recent years Silicon Valley has moved in the opposite direction. The report recommends seven ways for DOJ to respond to this problem, including “considering whether legislation to address encryption (and all related service provider access) challenges should be pursued.”

The lengthy chapter on foreign influence operations describes five categories of meddling, from hacking election infrastructure to spreading disinformation. It also lays out a policy for disclosing foreign meddling investigations to their targets, tech companies whose platforms are involved, lawmakers and the public.

This meddling “may violate a number of federal laws on which the Department may base criminal investigations and prosecutions,” the report says, but DOJ is “also considering whether new criminal statutes aimed more directly at this type of activity are needed.”

In addition to foreign influence campaigns, the report also covers the more prosaic cybercrime schemes that prosecutors and agents deal with on a daily basis. Chapter 2 discusses the types of cybercrime that the department investigates, from distributed denial-of-service attacks to ransomware infections. Chapter 3 explains how the government fights back, including prosecution tools like the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, techniques like surveillance of suspects and other response options like dismantling botnets. Chapter 4 describes the government’s private-sector partnerships, information-sharing channels and interagency response plans. And Chapter 5 explains how different DOJ components are training and retaining cybersecurity experts.

Chapter 6 lays out the challenges for cybercrime investigations and prosecutions. Among them are the reticence of victims to report breaches, the government’s sometimes tense relationship with security researchers and gaps in DOJ’s legal authority to access data controlled by foreign companies.

In the encryption section, DOJ notes that it cannot rely solely on purchasing workarounds like Cellebrite or GrayKey.

“Expanding the government’s exploitation of vulnerabilities for law enforcement purposes will likely require significantly higher expenditures — and in the end it may not be a scalable solution,” the report warns. “All vulnerabilities have a limited lifespan and may have a limited scope of applicability.”

Another problem relevant to election security is that the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act only empowers DOJ to prosecute people who hack internet-connected devices.

“In many conceivable situations, electronic voting machines will not meet those criteria, as they are typically kept off the Internet,” the report notes. “Consequently, should hacking of a voting machine occur, the government would not, in many conceivable circumstances, be able to use the CFAA to prosecute the hackers.”

At the Aspen event, Rosenstein said the report underscored how DOJ “must continually adapt criminal justice and intelligence tools to combat hackers and other cybercriminals.”

The DOJ began compiling the report in February, after Attorney General Jeff Sessions, under fire from congressional Democrats for not appearing to prioritize election security, created a Cyber-Digital Task Force to study DOJ-related cyber issues and “identify how federal law enforcement can more effectively accomplish its mission in this vital and evolving area.”

The report mostly summarizes previously known information about DOJ, its headquarters components like the National Security Division and its agencies like the FBI.

In some cases, the report copies and pastes text directly from federal websites, including in a section describing INTERPOL Washington.

Deputy AG Rosenstein Details DOJ Efforts To Fight Election Meddling

[NBC News](#), July 19, 2018

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein released a detailed Justice Department report Thursday describing efforts to combat foreign manipulation of American elections.

The document offered no major new policy initiatives, but described the nature of foreign influence operations and the efforts by the Justice Department and the FBI to monitor, expose and, in some cases, prosecute those involved.

The report focused exclusively on the activities of the Justice Department, even while acknowledging that “the malign foreign influence threat” requires “a unified, strategic approach across all government agencies.”

But there is no evidence that such a unified strategy exists within the Trump administration. The president himself has never fully acknowledged the scope, nature and details of the Russian operation to influence the 2016 presidential election. At times, he has disputed that the Russians interfered at all, despite the unanimous assessment of major intelligence agencies.

And there is no single official in the Trump administration in charge of coordinating efforts to prevent foreign election interference.

Rosenstein described the various aspects of foreign influence operations remarks he delivered at the Aspen Security Forum. He said in prepared remarks:

Like terrorism and other national security threats, Rosenstein said, "the malign foreign influence threat requires a unified, strategic approach across all government agencies. The Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, State, Defense, Treasury, Intelligence agencies, and others play important roles."

He added that "other sectors of society also need to do their part. State and local governments must secure their election infrastructure. Technology companies need to prevent misuse of their platforms. Public officials, campaigns, and other potential victims need to study the threats and protect themselves and their networks. And citizens need to understand the playing field."

Rosenstein said the Justice Department would step up efforts to prosecute people involved in foreign influence efforts, and would work with social media companies to combat them.

Simply providing more information to the public — exposing the hidden hand of a foreign government behind public messaging — would also help, he said.

The Justice Department report announced what the DOJ called a new policy governing when and how the U.S. will publicly expose foreign threats, listing specific situations such as when the government wants to alert victims and tech companies, inform Congress or bolster prosecution efforts against malign actors.

Rosenstein was to acknowledge that the need to protect investigations and keep sources and methods out of public view sometimes make it impossible to disclose foreign efforts. He also pointed out the need for the government to steer clear of favoring any particular political views over others.

Still, he said, "The First Amendment does not preclude us from publicly identifying and countering foreign government-sponsored propaganda."

He added, "Heated debates and passionate disagreements about public policy and political leadership are essential to democracy," Rosentstein was to say. "We resolve those disagreements at the ballot

box, and then we keep moving forward to future elections that reflect the will of citizens. Foreign governments should not be secret participants, covertly spreading propaganda and fanning the flames of division."

Trump Administration Supports Bill To Prevent UAS Threats

By Brenda Marie Rivers

[ExecutiveGov](#), July 19, 2018

The Trump administration has expressed support for a Senate bill that would authorize the departments of Homeland Security and Justice to develop, test and deploy technology aimed at countering unmanned aircraft systems that pose safety risks to the public.

The Preventing Emerging Threats Act of 2018 also proposes measures to further commercial drone market development, protect privacy and civil liberties and increase the safety of national airspace operations, the White House said Tuesday.

Current law prohibits the federal government from using detection, tracking and mitigation platforms designed to thwart drone threats.

The White House calls for the creation of a legal framework meant to safeguard people from those who use UAS for nefarious purposes such as terrorism, espionage, illicit surveillance, illegal aircraft and law enforcement interference, contraband delivery in prisons or the smuggling of drugs and other harmful materials along U.S. borders.

The administration is willing to work with Congress to address the legislation's objectives.

Tech Pressure On Privacy: National Security Requires A Fuller View Of Corporate Social Responsibility

[Just Security](#), July 19, 2018

The corporate world and the U.S. national security apparatus increasingly find themselves in conflict over technology and expertise, with implications for the effectiveness of U.S. intelligence and law enforcement. The clashes, from the 1990s telecom-privacy debates to today's confrontations over access to iPhones and social media infiltration, are more than just occasional spats between the private and public sectors. To navigate this new environment, companies need to examine their role as corporate citizens, while the U.S. government needs to assess how to achieve the outcome it wants, through market-based incentives.

During the past several decades, the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become commonplace across industries. Starting in the early

1990s, CSR began to evolve from a means of brand defense against external criticism, disconnected from a company's strategy, to a framework for strategically organizing a company's operations to improve competitive advantage. Notably, CSR has informed the concept of "triple bottom-line accounting," which measures social, environmental, and financial outcomes. CSR has become so widely accepted that multiple, major companies now have chief CSR officers. However, CSR is not altruistic philanthropy; it is meant to enhance a company's bottom line by appealing to consumers and by attracting human capital.

But a fully-fleshed-out CSR paradigm needs to include considerations of national security. One aspect of CSR is ensuring that a company's engagement in politics and public policy is legitimate, non-corrupt, and transparent. This objective is consistent with the government's efforts to strengthen respect for the rule-of-law and for transparency in political systems. To preserve these values, a country must have the necessary intelligence and security resources to identify and disrupt threat actors seeking to corrode these attributes, whether through spying or terrorism. But multiple companies, including two ranked among the top 10 firms in 2017 for their CSR reputations – Google and Microsoft — have made decisions in recent years that indicate they have a limited view of CSR that produces unintended national-security consequences.

Independent and Irresponsible

The changing dynamics of U.S. government relationships with the private sector since the end of the Cold War has made CSR a factor in American national security. Throughout the Cold War, the government was the engine for U.S. technological innovation.

This began to shift in the 1990s, once the Cold War concluded. U.S. government participation in research and development declined, and private industry pursued technologies on its own that nonetheless remained significant to maintaining U.S. elements of national power.

An early indication of the tensions that have become prominent in recent years appeared during the 1990s, in the debate between the government and industry over encryption. The McGuffin at the center of this storm was known as a "clipper chip." This device — advocated by both the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) — would have provided national security and law-enforcement entities a guaranteed "back door" to encrypted communications. Industry representatives aligned with civil liberties groups to oppose the introduction of this capability. The Clinton administration ultimately abandoned the proposal.

Two decades after the clipper chip showdown, similar tensions re-emerged over privately-developed technological advances. They centered around two primary issues. The first was, again, U.S. government access to encrypted communications. This was inevitable, given that the previous round of discussions had become a war of attrition that ultimately wore down an administration's resolve, rather than a cooperative, collaborative effort to reach a satisfactory solution to a national-security dilemma. The second issue was the role that social media platforms played in facilitating terrorist ideologies and, more recently, foreign-sponsored influence campaigns directed at disrupting the American political process.

The federal government made several efforts, in the mid-2010s, to address these issues. The FBI raised the issue in 2014, saying terrorist groups and criminal actors were making increasing use of encryption, which created a problem that then-FBI Director James Comey referred to as "going dark." The bureau, arguing the urgency of the issue, initially claimed that it had warrants to access more than 7,000 devices but could not do so successfully due to encryption. The FBI acknowledged this year that an error in its methodology had produced an inflated number and, according to the Washington Post, there might have been as few as 1,000 instances. Even that reduced figure still represents 1,000 too many instances of judicial process being obstructed.

In early 2016, the White House met with technology industry executives about countering the exploitation of social media by militant groups. This confab clearly failed to anticipate or develop effective measures against threat actors' use of social media platforms against the United States, as Russia's efforts to disrupt the 2016 elections would disastrously demonstrate.

These conversations about encryption and social media were not only ineffective in their own right, but also failed to pre-empt new troubles in the public-private sector relationship. The most high-profile escalation was the 2016 stand-off between the FBI and Apple over unlocking an iPhone that one of the San Bernardino, California, shooters had used. This apparently was not due to a lack of capacity on Apple's part since the company had reportedly unlocked phones for authorities on at least 70 occasions since 2008. While the Apple case grabbed headlines, U.S. authorities also were encountering similar resistance from WhatsApp.

Violent and criminal non-state actors were not the only entities exploiting the new technologies that the private sector developed and controlled. Social media allowed Russia-driven disinformation to run rampant. Facebook, in 2017 for instance, acknowledged that 126

million users may have seen inflammatory ads that a Kremlin-linked company had purchased.

Uncertain Partnerships

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. government has relied increasingly on the private sector for advancements in technology. Multiple agencies have established entities meant to adopt and adapt industry-driven innovation. For instance, in 1999, In-Q-Tel (initially known as In-Q-It) formed, as an independent non-profit corporation, to ensure that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) could obtain cutting-edge technologies. More recently, both the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have established Silicon Valley offices that resemble venture capital firms to support private-sector innovation. DoD established the Defense Innovation Unit Experimental (DIUx) in 2015 and announced in 2016 that it would open a second office in Boston, Massachusetts. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) also announced in 2015 that it planned to open a Silicon Valley office.

Despite these efforts, social media and other technology companies have proved to be unreliable partners in providing services to the U.S. government. Twitter, for instance, as of mid-2016, had cut off U.S. intelligence from an analytics service that monitored and sorted tweets in real time. Such information could help identify the emergence of trends in sentiment that might indicate upticks in radicalization or the spread of hostile influence campaigns. Twitter's decision was particularly confounding since it continued to sell data to Russia, a country that, by 2016, had taken a decidedly adversarial posture toward the United States. More recently, tech companies have demonstrated similar unreliability. In 2017, Google signed a contract with DoD to provide artificial intelligence services to analyze military imagery. But after thousands of Google employees protested the company's work, Google opted this year not to renew its DoD contract.

U.S. policy on immigration has ignited controversy within other companies that might thwart the provision of services to the U.S. government. Amazon employees have opposed their company's sale of facial recognition software to law enforcement and its provision of services to entities that work with the DHS's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Similarly, Microsoft employees recently planned to pressure the company over its ICE contracts. The employees of both Amazon and Microsoft seem to lack an understanding that ICE does not make policy; it is merely an implementer.

CSR Begins at Home

The concept of CSR came into vogue with the multi-nationalization of companies. But industry needs to

do some soul-searching about the implications of its sometimes-capricious decisions for the United States. Actions that may seem ideologically pure to companies and their employees inflict unintended consequences on the American political system. The rule of law and political transparency may be degraded by the tech sector's decisions about how to interact with government.

When companies such as Apple and WhatsApp dig in their heels and fight for encryption, they are undermining the rule-of-law. By denying assistance to government agencies that have legitimately obtained court-issued warrants, these companies flout the intent of the judicial branch of the government and give cover to criminals trying to hide illicit activity behind indecipherable communications.

Relatedly, in acting as unreliable partners, companies that refuse to do business with government agencies decrease the efficacy of the civil service, which has no control over the decision-making of politicians. In an overheated climate of populist rhetoric, inefficiencies of government agencies created by a lack of appropriate resources such as private-sector technological assistance can embolden political demagogues to attack the supposed "deep state." That further damages the institutions that serve as checks and balances to runaway politicization of government.

Political transparency is also an unintended victim of the tech sector's misplaced indignation. Whether companies like it or not, politicians are put in office by the electorate and make policies in response to that electorate. When employees of a Google, Amazon, or Microsoft refuse to facilitate the efficient implementation of those policies, they are, in effect, second-guessing the policymaking process and taking upon themselves the power of a fourth branch of government. Furthermore, when social media companies facilitate the proliferation of disinformation, whether intentionally or not, they introduce unnecessary opacity to the political process.

A New Public-Private Balance

The U.S. government will never reclaim its position as the engine of innovation that it held during the Cold War. Instead, it must become a compelling consumer, providing incentives for U.S. companies to respond. The alternative — imposing new regulations that dictate additional obligations — has the potential to create its own unintended consequences, including chilling innovation, that will not be easy to reverse. However, the private sector needs to fully accept the responsibilities to the rule-of-law and transparent governance that a fully-elaborated interpretation of CSR requires. Internal and external stakeholders should demand nothing less than

that industries uphold the same principles at home as they claim to support abroad.

The views expressed in this essay are entirely those of the author and do not represent the views of any U.S. government entity. Photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

OTHER DHS NEWS

Trump's Consumer Watchdog Pick Defends Record In Senate Hearing

By Katanga Johnson
[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Trump's Pick To Run Consumer Watchdog Faces Skeptical Senate

By Ken Sweet
[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Trump's nominee to take over the nation's consumer watchdog agency exasperated some Democrats with vague answers at a Senate hearing Thursday, but Kathy Kraninger appears to be on her way to getting confirmed later this year.

Republicans hold a 51-seat Republican majority in the Senate, so Kraninger's confirmation seems all but certain.

Trump nominated Kraninger on June 18 to replace Mick Mulvaney, who has been acting director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau since late November. Mulvaney also runs the Office of Management and Budget, where Kraninger currently works. She oversees roughly \$250 billion in spending on federal government programs.

Democrats who've questioned Kraninger's qualifications to lead the CFPB since her nomination pressed her Thursday on her lack of experience in banking or financial services, as well as issues such as payday lending and enforcement actions against financial institutions. Under Mulvaney, the agency has taken a more business-friendly approach and Democrats assume Kraninger will do the same.

Kraninger appeared non-committal on various issues raised by senators on both sides of the aisle. Republicans seemed nonplussed but Democrats grew frustrated.

"You got the votes to lead the agency," said Sen. Jon Tester, D-Montana, referring to Republican control of the Senate and the fact that Democrats cannot

filibuster the nomination. "It would be really helpful to know where you're at."

"I am trying to get an answer from you, and I just can't. It's maddening," said Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii.

Kraninger did not appear to win the support of any Democrats on the committee with her testimony, nor did she appear to frustrate Republicans, so the final vote to move her nomination out of committee could fall along party lines. It would then go in front of the full Senate later this year.

Some Democrats focused their line of questioning on Kraninger's experience in the White House's budget office, particularly since the office is in charge of moving government funds around to implement policies.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts, focused most of her questioning on Kraninger's role in implementing and setting the Trump administration's policy of separating children from their parents who crossed the border illegally. In her current job at the White House, Kraninger oversaw budget requests at the Department of Homeland Security and other government agencies. The DHS is responsible for implementing the administration's immigration policies.

Warren asked for Kraninger's opinion on the Trump child separation policy, and Kraninger replied, "It is not appropriate to give my opinion" and did not give a clear answer on what role she may have played in the policy.

Warren took the non-answer as a signal that she was involved in some way.

"You were part of it. It is moral stain that will follow you for the rest of your life," Warren said.

The OMB also has oversight of funding proposals for the White House's response to disasters like Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. The administration has been criticized for not doing enough to help Puerto Rico recover following the devastating storm.

"(Your work at OMB) does not give me faith that when you have to stand up for seniors, service members, students, homeowners against some of the biggest financial institutions in this country that you'll do that," said Sen. Bob Menendez, D-New Jersey. "If you couldn't do it for the people of Puerto Rico, I don't know how you're going to do it for anybody else."

The White House and Republicans argue that Kraninger's experience at the OMB, arranging programs for large government departments like Homeland Security and the Federal Reserve, makes her qualified as a manager for a large government bureau.

"Given her depth and diversity of public service experience, I have the utmost confidence that she is well-prepared to lead the Bureau in enforcing federal consumer financial laws and protecting consumers in the

financial marketplace,” said Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, at the start of the hearing. Crapo is chairman of the Senate Banking Committee.

Kraninger’s prepared remarks called for the CFPB to be “fair and transparent” and to “empower consumers to make good choices and provide certainty for market participants.” Those comments echo statements by Mulvaney, who believes the bureau’s power is too unrestrained.

But Kraninger did seem to differ on some positions regarding the CFPB than her current boss.

She appeared supportive of the bureau’s work when it comes to non-discrimination in financial products as well as the idea that the bureau has a role in protecting student loan borrowers. She also disagreed with the characterization of the bureau as a “sick, sad joke,” a phrase Mulvaney once used to describe the bureau when he was a Congressman from South Carolina.

Ken Sweet covers the banking industry and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau for The Associated Press. Follow him on Twitter at @kensweet.

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Democrats Rip Trump’s CFPB Nominee, Calling Her Role In Controversial Administration Policies ‘A Moral Stain’

By Jim Puzzanghera

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 19, 2018

Senate Democrats on Thursday aggressively ripped into President Trump’s nominee to head the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, saying her involvement as a White House aide in controversial administration policies disqualified her from watching out for average Americans.

In a highly charged confirmation hearing, Democratic senators questioned Kathy Kraninger about her role overseeing the budgets of agencies that developed and implemented the child-separation policy at the border and the response to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico — and verbally unloaded on her when she evaded direct answers.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) could barely control her rage as she pressed Kraninger about whether she had any role in implementing the “zero tolerance” immigration policy that has separated nearly 3,000 children from their parents crossing the U.S.-Mexico border since April.

Kraninger said she was not involved in setting the immigration policy but repeatedly said she could not answer questions about any advice about implementing that or other policies that she gave at the White House.

“These are innocent children who may be scarred forever by this policy. It is fundamentally immoral and you you were part of it, Ms. Kraninger,” Warren said during the Senate Banking Committee hearing.

“It is a moral stain that will follow you for the rest of your life,” she continued. “And if the Senate votes to give a big promotion to you after this, then it is a stain on the senators who do so.”

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) also attacked Kraninger, associate director for general government at the White House Office of Management and Budget, for the administration’s bungled response to Puerto Rico’s hurricane damage.

“You were a significant architect of the Trump administration’s response in Puerto Rico, which was at best botched and incompetent. At worst it reflects the administration’s most insidious views about Hispanic Americans,” he said.

“And instead of turning to help them you pinched pennies. And worst of all, I think you treated them like second-class citizens,” he said. “That does not give me the faith that when you’re going to have to stand up for seniors, service members, students, homeowners against some of the biggest financial institutions in this country, that you’ll do that.”

The dispute over Kraninger’s nomination highlights the highly partisan disputes over the bureau that have existed since it was created by the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act in the wake of the financial crisis and, now, Democratic opposition to some key Trump administration policies.

“This is a multifaceted battle with the president, being played out in the context of this committee’s nomination process,” lamented the panel’s chairman, Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), who supports Kraninger’s nomination. He said he hopes to hold a confirmation vote in the committee in two weeks, with Kraninger likely to be confirmed by the full Senate in the coming months.

President Trump surprised consumer advocates, financial industry executive and analysts last month when he nominated Kraninger to head the CFPB. She is a little-known White House aide whose background has been largely in Homeland Security, and she has no experience in consumer protection, financial regulation or the banking industry.

At the Office of Management and Budget, Kraninger oversees spending at five agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security.

Previously, she served as deputy assistant secretary for policy at the Department of Homeland

Security during the George W. Bush administration and also worked for the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and the Senate Appropriations subcommittee handling Homeland Security funding.

Kraninger is seen as a protege of Mick Mulvaney, the director of the White House Office of Management and Budget who also has served as acting director of the CFPB since November.

Trump installed Mulvaney in the position temporarily after the resignation of the bureau's first director, Richard Cordray, in a controversial move that led to protests and a legal challenge from Cordray's chosen successor, Leandra English.

Mulvaney had been an outspoken critic of the agency and has scaled back the bureau's enforcement efforts and made it more industry friendly.

Kraninger, who has worked for Mulvaney at the OMB since March 2017, is expected to continue his approach to running the agency.

In her testimony, Kraninger said she would work to uphold Congress' mandate that the bureau ensure that all consumers have access to financial products and services that are "fair, transparent and competitive."

She said she would do that in part by making "robust use of cost-benefit analysis," a favored approach of Republicans that Democrats argue can be manipulated by industry and create roadblocks to quickly enacting important regulations.

Kraninger pledged to take "aggressive action against bad actors who break the rules."

"Nothing is more destructive to competitive markets and consumer choice than fraudulent behavior," she said.

Kraninger also signaled she opposed the funding independence that Congress gave the CFPB when it established the agency.

Like most other financial regulators, including the Federal Reserve, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., the bureau is funded outside the congressional appropriations process to help insulate it from political pressures.

Republicans on the committee supported Kraninger's nomination for the job, which has a five-year term.

"Given her depth and diversity of public service experience, I have the utmost confidence that she is well prepared to lead the bureau in enforcing federal consumer financial laws and protecting consumers in the financial marketplace," Crapo said.

But even some moderate Democrats who are up for reelection this year in states won by Trump in 2016

expressed serious concerns about her background and experience.

"It is no secret that Mr. Mulvaney is no fan of the CFPB. That aside, would you say he has done a good job as acting director?" Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.), asked Kraninger.

When she didn't directly answer, Tester ordered her to answer the question.

"He is my current boss, who I respect greatly, and has been focused on implementing the law, so from that standpoint, I would say, 'Yes,'" Kraninger said.

After her nomination, committee Democrats sent letters to Kraninger pressing her for answers about her involvement in the immigration and hurricane relief policies. They were frustrated that she did not answer and unsuccessfully pushed Crapo to delay the hearing until she did.

"For months, I urged the administration to nominate someone to lead the CFPB who had a track record of working for consumers. Unfortunately, Ms. Kraninger has no experience whatsoever in consumer protection," said Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio).

"Nobody wants Mr. Mulvaney out of the CFPB faster than I do. But American consumers can't afford five years of someone who stands with the bankers in this administration and on Wall Street," Brown said.

Democrats said they were frustrated by Kraninger's refusal to answer questions about her management experience at the White House, which her supporters point to as offsetting the lack of experience in the consumer financial field.

"You're coming in and asserting that you're a manager and you can't characterize anything you're doing as a manager," said Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii).

Trump Nominee Assailed At Hearing As Unfit To Lead Consumer Bureau

By Katy O'Donnell And Zachary Warmbrodt, Politico

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

Kathy Kraninger, President Donald Trump's pick to head the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, faced withering criticism on Thursday from Democrats, who repeatedly charged that she was unqualified to lead the powerful agency.

With her confirmation already resting on a tight margin, Kraninger drew no words of support from any Democrat during a nearly three-hour confirmation hearing, which Senate Banking Chairman Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) called "intense."

Kraninger, who has worked as a congressional aide and at the departments of Transportation and

Homeland Security, has a short paper trail and no clear experience in financial policy. The bureau's critics see her nomination as a way to keep acting Director Mick Mulvaney, her boss at the Office of Management and Budget, in the loop at the CFPB.

With no consumer protection record to attack, Democrats homed in on Kraninger's position as an associate OMB director overseeing the agencies responsible for the controversial "zero-tolerance" border policy and disaster recovery in Puerto Rico.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) repeatedly asked Kraninger whether she had any role in "developing or implementing" the policy responsible for separating children from their parents at the border.

"You've given a very lawyerly and limited answer — you're dodging," Warren told Kraninger. "The answers have also been contradictory: You've said you had no role in 'setting' the policy, but you also can't describe the advice you gave on the policy. Which raises a question: Which is it — you had no role, or you had a role and you can't describe it?" she added.

"I had no role in developing it, in terms of its announcement by the attorney general," Kraninger responded. "Subsequent to the attorney general's announcement, there were meetings within the administration on the general topic of the implementation."

Warren said the policy "is fundamentally immoral, and you — you — were part of it, Ms. Kraninger. It is a moral stain that will follow you for the rest of your life, and if the Senate votes to give a big promotion to you, this then it is a stain on the senators who do so."

Shortly after Warren stopped speaking, a member of the audience started playing a tape of children crying at the border.

Even moderate Democrats from states Trump won by wide margins appeared unimpressed by Kraninger.

Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) said he had gone to the hearing with an open mind about the nomination but grew frustrated with Kraninger's answers.

"I will confirm a lot of people that I disagree with if they answer the questions. But when they don't answer the questions, there's something fundamentally wrong here," Tester said in an interview. "I was going to make my decision based off of this hearing and she failed."

Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), who has a fairly close relationship with Trump, said she hadn't made up her mind but said she had concerns "about core competency."

"I also have concern that someone sitting there could listen to a story about someone losing their home, someone losing their life savings, and not feel compelled

to move in a public policy way to remove that misery or to respond to that misery," Heitkamp told POLITICO.

"I know a lot of times it's underrated, but in this case I would tell you empathy is pretty important in this job."

The hearing was contentious from the outset, when Crapo and ranking member Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) set the tone with an unusually heated exchange over Democrats' requests for documentation of her role in the separation policy and managing aid for Puerto Rico.

Crapo chided Democrats for their attempt to postpone the hearing until they received documents that he said were "designed to go after extraneous administration policies that the requesters do not like." The request, he said, "goes far beyond the precedent of this committee and what it needs."

"This is a multifaceted battle with the president being played out in the context of this committee's nomination process," Crapo said. "I hope this doesn't change the tenor of cooperation we have on many other issues."

Crapo and Brown have a more congenial relationship than many other committee leaders in the deeply partisan Senate.

Brown referred to Trump's press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday in Helsinki in his response as he chastised Republicans.

"There's never a consequence for this administration because all of you continue to do the administration's bidding," Brown said of the Republican panel members. "Why should the president change his behavior when there is never a price to pay?"

One price, he said, would be holding the nomination until the White House provided answers on Kraninger.

Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) later told Brown, "It's actually you that's doing the president's bidding on tariffs ... so I could throw that right back." Corker then importuned his colleagues to "somehow depoliticize this bureau."

That plea went unheeded, as Republicans depicted the CFPB as an unaccountable agency run amok under its previous managers and Democrats aired their disgust with Mulvaney's tenure.

Kraninger outlined four priorities in her opening statement, which played to standard conservative sentiments about the agency. The bureau, she said, should be fair and transparent; work with other financial regulators and state authorities on supervision and enforcement; safely guard sensitive information; and "be accountable to the American people for its actions, including its expenditure of resources."

She largely avoided taking positions on policies Thursday, beyond saying she approved of Mulvaney's actions as director.

Immigration Defense Group Rejects Salesforce.com Donation

By Joseph Menn

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

U.S. Border Officials Confiscate Family's \$500,000 Inheritance

By Daniel Moritz-Rabson

[Newsweek](#), July 19, 2018

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has been holding a family's \$500,000 inheritance for almost a year, news outlet CBC News reported on Thursday.

U.S. law prohibits moving more than \$10,000 into or out of the country without first notifying the government. As a result, David Saikaley from Ottawa is blaming TD Canada Trust bank for telling him to mail the money to relatives across the border.

Saikaley acted as the executor of a relative's will and delivered money to a beneficiary whose health is declining and has an estimated \$60,000 in medical bills to pay. But when he rushed to send bank drafts across the border, U.S. officials seized the mail.

"It's like this money has fallen into a black hole," Saikaley said. "I had faulty advice. I trusted the bank. I thought they were experts. I'm just a high school teacher. I don't know anything about sending money."

TD won't cancel the bank drafts, which it regards as cash, according to CBC News. But U.S. border officials also refuses to release the money and sent Saikaley a letter saying the checks were counterfeit.

"We understand that this is a very frustrating situation and always strive to do our best to resolve any issue that a customer may experience and provide support and guidance," Senior Manager of Corporate and Public Affairs at TD Carly Libman wrote in a statement to the news outlet. The bank also said it has been working with Saikaley to fix the problem, but he said his complaints to the bank have not resulted in substantive help.

Saikaley's conundrum highlights a potential legal trouble that can arise when people try to enter or exit the U.S. with large sums of cash.

When 64-year-old Rustem Kazazi from Cleveland, Ohio, was traveling to Albania to visit relatives in October

2017, CBP took more than \$58,000 in undeclared cash he had with him.

In another incident, Anthonia Nwaorie was stopped by border agents last October while attempting to fly from Houston to Nigeria, where she wanted to open a medical clinic with over \$41,000 she had saved. But Nwaorie had not declared that she was attempting to leave the country with more than \$10,000, and CBP agents confiscated her money. CBP returned her money after seven months, but Nwaorie had already launched a class-action lawsuit against civil forfeiture practices.

"People shouldn't have their property put in limbo like this. She lawfully earned this money from her income as a nurse," Dan Alban, a lawyer for the Institute for Justice, which is representing Nwaorie, told Newsweek in May.

The Washington Post reported that federal authorities seized over \$2 billion from people in 2017.

GLOBAL MEDIA

EU Raps Hungary For 'Stop Soros' Law, Steps Up Legal Battle

By Reuters Staff

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

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EU To Take Legal Action Over Hungary's Hardline Migrant Policies

The bloc's executive said it would ask its courts to consider the government in violation of treaties requiring protection for foreigners seeking asylum

By Drew Hinshaw

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 19, 2018

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NATIONAL NEWS

Sarah Sanders: Discussions Are Underway To Bring Putin To Washington This Fall

By Naomi Lim

[Washington Examiner](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin could next meet in Washington as early as this fall, after White House press secretary Sarah Sanders confirmed on Thursday that plans are already in motion to extend an invitation.

"In Helsinki, @POTUS agreed to ongoing working level dialogue between the two security council staffs," Sanders wrote on Twitter.

"President Trump asked @AmbJohnBolton to invite President Putin to Washington in the fall and those discussions are already underway," she continued, referring to national security adviser John Bolton.

In Helsinki, @POTUS agreed to ongoing working level dialogue between the two security council staffs. President Trump asked @AmbJohnBolton to invite President Putin to Washington in the fall and those discussions are already underway.— Sarah Sanders (@PressSec) July 19, 2018

Sanders' confirmation follows a tweet from Trump on Thursday morning, saying he was looking forward to the leaders' next series of discussions after their controversial meetings in Helsinki.

"The Summit with Russia was a great success, except with the real enemy of the people, the Fake News Media. I look forward to our second meeting so that we can start implementing some of the many things discussed," Trump wrote.

Trump received bipartisan condemnations on Monday for comments he made during a press conference with Putin at the conclusion of their summit, in which he dismissed Russian interference in the 2016 election. The remarks have been criticized as they appear to undermine U.S. intelligence community assessments that indicate Kremlin-linked operatives meddled in the American political process in 2016.

Trump and the White House have since tried to clarify his statements, repeating that the president trusts his intelligence officials.

Trump Invites Putin To Visit Washington For Summit This Fall

By Bob Fredericks

[New York Post](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump invited Russian leader Vladimir Putin to Washington for a summit in the fall, the administration said Thursday.

"In Helsinki, @POTUS agreed to ongoing working level dialogue between the two security council staffs," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders wrote in a tweet.

"President Trump asked [John Bolton] to invite President Putin to Washington in the fall and those discussions are already underway."

Both Trump and the Russian strongman have hailed Monday's summit in Helsinki — where they met face-to-face for about two hours — as a huge success despite the days of controversy that followed.

Trump on Monday cast doubt on the US intelligence community's unanimous assessment that Putin ordered his government to meddle in the 2016 elections — only to reverse himself after the ensuing bipartisan outcry.

He also suggested that he believed Putin's denials, only to later acknowledge that Russia — and maybe "other people" — was behind the meddling.

On Wednesday, he twice replied "no" when asked if the interference was ongoing.

Sanders later said he was talking about something else.

Donald Trump To Invite Vladimir Putin For U.S. Visit This Fall

'Discussions are already underway' for Putin visit, White House press secretary says

By Rebecca Ballhaus And Vivian Salama

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Trump Plans To Invite Putin To Washington This Fall

By Louis Nelson And Stephanie Murray

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

President Donald Trump asked his national security adviser to invite Russian President Vladimir Putin to Washington this fall, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Thursday afternoon.

The statement comes after Trump teased a second meeting with Putin on Twitter earlier in the day. Sanders says the president tasked National Security Adviser John Bolton with extending an invitation to the Russian leader.

"In Helsinki, @POTUS agreed to ongoing working level dialogue between the two security council staffs. President Trump asked @AmbJohnBolton to invite President Putin to Washington in the fall and those discussions are already underway," Sanders said in a tweet.

Trump wrote online Thursday that he is looking forward to a second sitdown with Putin, insisting that his much-criticized bilateral meeting with him on Monday was in fact a "great success" that the media have unfairly covered negatively.

"The Summit with Russia was a great success, except with the real enemy of the people, the Fake News Media. I look forward to our second meeting so that we can start implementing some of the many things discussed, including stopping terrorism, security for

Israel, nuclear proliferation, cyber attacks, trade, Ukraine, Middle East peace, North Korea and more,” the president wrote on Twitter. “There are many answers, some easy and some hard, to these problems...but they can ALL be solved!”

If Putin receives an invitation and accepts it, the trip would likely mark his first visit to the White House in more than a decade. Putin last visited the White House in the early 2000s, when former President George W. Bush was in office.

Republican Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa said she would not object to Trump meeting again with Putin but recommended that a member of the administration accompany him to take notes, unlike the meeting earlier this week.

“I’m not saying anything against the president. But I would say we just have to be cautious because what’s to stop Putin from saying: ‘Oh yeah he agreed to all this stuff,’” she said in an interview Thursday.

The president has faced a tidal wave of criticism since his meeting Monday with Putin in Finland, where he told reporters at a bilateral news conference that he saw no reason why Russia would be to blame for a 2016 campaign of cyberattacks intended to impact the outcome of that year’s U.S. presidential election. That Trump would accept Putin’s denial that Russia was involved over the word of his own intelligence agencies prompted a bipartisan backlash that has yet to ebb.

Outrage over Trump’s comment was so strong that the president took the rare step Tuesday of admitting a mistake, telling reporters that he had meant to say he saw no reason why Russia “wouldn’t” have been to blame for the 2016 election meddling, the opposite of what he had said a day earlier.

But Trump has since returned to his defiant stance, insisting that the media have unfairly painted his Finland meeting with Putin as something less than a total success. Earlier Monday, he wrote online that the media want to see a “major confrontation” with Russia, even one “that could lead to war.”

“They are pushing so recklessly hard and hate the fact that I’ll probably have a good relationship with Putin. We are doing MUCH better than any other country!” he wrote.

Trump Invites Putin To Visit Washington, White House Says

By Alex Pappas

[Fox News](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump has asked his White House to extend an invitation to Russian President Vladimir Putin

to visit Washington later this year, Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said Thursday.

“In Helsinki, @POTUS agreed to ongoing working level dialogue between the two security council staffs. President Trump asked @AmbJohnBolton to invite President Putin to Washington in the fall and those discussions are already underway,” Sanders tweeted.

Trump and Putin met in Helsinki, Finland on Monday. Earlier Thursday, Trump called the summit “a great success” and said he looked “forward to our second meeting.”

Meanwhile, the White House sought Thursday to tamp down another firestorm that broke out in the wake of Trump’s summit this week with Putin, making clear the president does not support the Russian leader’s proposal to allow his government to interview American officials.

“It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it,” Sanders said in a statement Thursday afternoon.

The statement came as the administration faced a mounting backlash for even entertaining Putin’s proposal, which pertained to the Robert Mueller probe.

The Russian leader on Monday had proposed an unusual quid pro quo, offering to let the special counsel team question newly indicted Russian officers as part of the election meddling case, if Russians could question certain U.S. individuals.

Trump, at their Helsinki press conference, called the offer “incredible.” On Wednesday, Sanders neither endorsed nor rejected the offer.

“He wants to work with his team and determine if there’s any validity that would be helpful to the process,” Sanders said, noting that Trump has made no “commitment.”

“The president is going to meet with his team,” she said.

But the plan swiftly set off alarm bells in Washington, especially among Putin’s apparent targets.

The first individual Putin voiced interest in questioning was Bill Browder, a prominent critic despised by the Kremlin for his role in pushing sanctions legislation around the world.

Browder, the CEO and co-founder of Hermitage Capital, has worked for years to advocate on behalf of his associate Sergei Magnitsky, whom he had hired to uncover massive financial fraud in Russia. Magnitsky died in Russian police custody nearly a decade ago, allegedly beaten to death. Browder later successfully pushed Russia sanctions legislation named after Magnitsky in the U.S. and beyond.

Browder, an American-born British citizen, noted to Fox News that Trump would not have “jurisdiction” over him.

Trump Invites Putin To Washington After Interview Furor

By Steve Holland, Doina Chiacu
[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Senate Rebuffs Russia Interviews Of Americans In Rebuke To Trump

By Laura Litvan
[Bloomberg News](#), July 19, 2018

The Republican-led Senate effectively rebuked President Donald Trump for considering Russia's request to question U.S. officials, giving voice to growing unease over the president's shifting policies toward his country's biggest adversary after his summit with Vladimir Putin.

In a resolution adopted 98-0 on Thursday, senators called on the U.S. to refuse to make any officials available for interrogation by Putin's government. Minutes before the vote was scheduled to begin, White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders issued a statement rejecting the Russian proposal.

“It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it,” Sanders said. A day earlier she didn't shoot down the idea, instead saying Trump was “going to meet with his team” about it.

The measure that forced the White House's hand is nonbinding. But the vote marked a rare decision by Republican leader Mitch McConnell to take up a resolution written by top Democrat Chuck Schumer undercutting the GOP president.

“Let this resolution be a warning to the administration that Congress will not allow this to happen,” Schumer of New York said on the Senate floor just before the vote. “I call on President Trump to say once and for all, not through his spokespeople, that the lopsided, disgraceful trade he called an ‘incredible offer’ is off the table.”

Some administration officials have said they are concerned there may be no shaking a public perception that Trump is too cozy with Putin. It was only three days ago that Trump stood next to the Russian president in Helsinki and questioned U.S. intelligence findings that the Kremlin meddled in the 2016 election.

Since then Trump issued a belated clarification, undercut the reversal with qualifiers, made new comments contradicting U.S. intelligence and then sent his spokeswoman out to deny it happened. Further, the lack of a public explanation of what Trump and Putin may have agreed to during more than two hours in private has left the entire U.S. policy toward Russia unclear.

“What did you agree to in that room?” Democratic Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania said on the Senate floor before the vote, saying the only accounts so far have come from Russian officials. ‘Meet With His Team’

At the summit with Trump in Helsinki, Putin proposed letting Russians observe interrogations of former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul and other Americans. In exchange, U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller could send members of his team to watch Russian questioning of 12 Russian intelligence agents indicted by a U.S. grand jury last week in connection with hacking Democratic Party email accounts before the 2016 election.

After the Senate's unanimous vote, McFaul wrote on Twitter, “98-0. Bipartisanship is not dead yet in the US Senate. Thank you all for your support.”

Allowing the interrogation of a former American ambassador would be an unprecedented breach in protections traditionally provided to the nation's diplomats. ‘Look Weak’

Trump's willingness to entertain the request makes him “look weak in the eyes of Vladimir Putin,” McFaul said Thursday. “We look like we won't push back on outrageous, crazy ideas,” McFaul, who served as ambassador to Russia under President Barack Obama, said on MSNBC. “That is not even good for President Trump.”

The Democratic resolution, S.Res. 584, says, “It is the sense of Congress that the United States should refuse to make available any current or former diplomat, civil servant, political appointee, law enforcement official, or member of the Armed Forces of the United States for questioning by the government of Vladimir Putin.”

While McFaul's name wasn't mentioned at the news conference held by the U.S. and Russian leaders in Helsinki, Trump described Putin's proposed reciprocal interrogations as an “incredible” deal.

FBI Director Christopher Wray said at the Aspen Security Conference on Wednesday that listening in as Russia interrogates suspects wanted by the U.S. is “certainly not high on our list of investigative techniques.” And letting Russians come to the U.S. to observe questioning, he said wryly, is “probably even lower on our list.” ‘Grave Concern’

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert told reporters Wednesday that a Russian grilling of a former diplomat “would be a grave concern to our former colleagues.” She said the Russians are making “absolutely absurd” assertions about 11 American citizens they want to question, although she declined to rule out the Russian proposal when asked about it repeatedly.

Also on Thursday, McConnell ordered Senate committees to review additional sanctions and “additional measures that could respond to or deter Russian malign behavior.”

A number of senators have signed on to a bill offered by Republican Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and Democrat Chris Van Hollen of Maryland that would impose stiff sanctions on Russia's energy and banking sectors if the Director of National Intelligence – not Trump – certifies that Russia interfered in any future election.

— With assistance by Chris Strohm, and Terrence Dopp

Republicans Block Anti-Putin Resolutions Before Senate Approves One Rebuke

By Nicholas Fandos And Sheryl Gay Stolberg
[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

Republicans in Congress on Thursday blocked a series of measures put forward by lawmakers — largely Democratic — desperate to isolate Republican leaders and publicly rebuke President Trump over his summit meeting with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia this week.

In the Senate, Republicans objected to two nonbinding measures that would have put the body on record as being in support of intelligence agency conclusions that Russia interfered in the 2016 election, called on Mr. Trump to fully impose sanctions against Russia and pressed for oversight of the summit meeting, including the production of any notes taken by Americans.

“If ever there was a moment to think not of just your party but for the country, this is it,” Senator Jeff Flake, Republican of Arizona, implored his colleagues before his bipartisan resolution was shot down.

Sen. Flake on Helsinki: “If ever there was a moment to think not of just your party but for the country, this is it...This is not a moment for spin, deflection, justification, circling the wagons, forgetting, moving on to the next news cycle, or for more of Orwell's doublespeak.” pic.twitter.com/yAFIJoEDJu

After the White House press secretary said that Mr. Trump was not considering a Putin proposal to make a

former American ambassador available to the Russian authorities for questioning, senators voted 98 to 0 in favor of a third nonbinding resolution expressing opposition to the Russian leader's suggestion.

“With this vote, the Senate has sent a message that is free from all ambiguity: Americans will not be handed over to Putin on our watch,” said Senator Brian Schatz, Democrat of Hawaii. “Those who serve our nation do not answer to the Russian president, and they have the support of a thankful nation.”

In the House, Democrats sought to push many of the same points with different tactics, but saw no more success. Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee voted down a request to subpoena testimony from the State Department interpreter who accompanied Mr. Trump into his private meeting with Mr. Putin in Helsinki, Finland. And on the House floor, Republicans blocked a Democratic effort to add hundreds of millions of dollars in grant funding for election security to a spending bill.

“The flashing red light calls us to action,” said Representative Steny H. Hoyer of Maryland, the No. 2 House Democrat. “Surely we can rise above pandering to party and Putin to act on behalf of our freedom and our security.”

Mr. Hoyer's remarks stirred Democrats to chants of “U.S.A.” on the House floor.

The flurry of votes came as lawmakers in both parties continued to cast about for appropriate responses to the fallout from the Finland meeting.

Standing next to Mr. Putin on Monday, Mr. Trump signaled that he took the Russian president's word over his own intelligence agencies that Russia did not meddle in the 2016 election.

On Tuesday, Mr. Trump said he misspoke and that he did believe the intelligence agencies. And then on Wednesday, he further confused lawmakers when he seemed to say the Russians were no longer targeting American elections, then backtracked again.

Republicans, many of whom are outraged by Mr. Trump's undercutting of the intelligence agencies, have indicated that they may prefer to address the situation with more sanctions, rather than potentially embarrassing oversight exercises or measures of censure. They announced steps in that direction on Thursday.

Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader, said that he had asked the chairmen of two important committees to hold oversight hearings on Russian sanctions passed into law last year and begin discussions on the potential for new measures to supplement them.

It was far from clear if senators could reach an agreement on such a measure in time to deter malfeasance before November's election. The most popular bipartisan sanctions proposal — written by Senators Marco Rubio, Republican of Florida, and Chris Van Hollen, Democrat of Maryland — is thought to need rewriting to avoid unintended consequences, though it gained the support of four Democrats and four Republicans on Thursday.

But in publicizing his request in a statement, Mr. McConnell clearly intended to send a message that the Republican Congress takes the issue seriously and stands prepared to act.

The first two resolutions considered on the Senate floor were offered by unanimous consent. That parliamentary technique allows senators to avoid debate and a roll-call vote, but also empowers a single senator to object and kill the measure.

A bipartisan resolution to commend the Justice Department and reaffirm the Senate's support for the intelligence community's findings was blocked when Senator John Cornyn of Texas, the No. 2 Republican in the Senate, objected.

Mr. Cornyn's move caught the sponsors of the resolution — Senators Flake and Chris Coons, Democrat of Delaware — off guard. It came after Mr. Flake, an outspoken critic of Mr. Trump, delivered an impassioned speech on the Senate floor accusing the president of "giving aid and comfort" to Mr. Putin.

"By choosing to reject object reality in Helsinki, the president let down the free world by giving aid and comfort to an enemy of democracy," Mr. Flake said. "In so doing he dimmed the light on freedom ever so slightly in our own country."

Mr. Cornyn said he favored considering new sanctions, "not sort of sense of the Senate resolutions that have no sting or no impact." Among his other objections was that the measure was largely symbolic — a remark that brought protests from Mr. Flake and Mr. Coons when they greeted reporters afterward.

The chagrined pair said they intended to introduce the measure again next week. Mr. Flake said symbolism was precisely the point.

"This simply says, in a symbolic way, that we in the Senate don't buy Vladimir Putin's rejection or his denial of election interference," Mr. Flake said. "We here in the Senate should stand and say we don't believe it. We know the intelligence is right. We stand behind our intelligence community. We need to say that in the Senate. Yes, it's symbolic, and symbolism is important."

A Republican also blocked a more expansive resolution introduced by Senator Bernie Sanders, independent of Vermont, that would have made it the

position of the Senate that Mr. Trump must work with American allies to aggressively combat Russian aggression, warn Mr. Putin not to interfere in November's elections and cooperate with the special counsel's investigation.

"Nobody is excusing Russia's meddling in our elections," said Senator Rand Paul, Republican of Kentucky, who objected to the request. "But simply bringing the hatred of the president to the Senate floor in order to say we're done with diplomacy, we are going to add more sanctions and more sanctions. You know what? I would rather that we still have open channels of discussion with the Russians."

The third resolution, offered by several Democrats, was meant to address the possibility of the United States allowing Russia to question American citizens that it says were involved in an illegal scheme with William F. Browder, a financier and critic of Mr. Putin, in exchange for allowing American authorities to question Russian intelligence officers indicted on a charge of cyberattacks. One of those citizens is Michael A. McFaul, an ambassador to Russia under President Barack Obama.

The resolution said that "the United States should refuse to make available any current or former diplomat, civil servant, political appointee, law enforcement official or member of the armed forces of the United States for questioning by the government of Vladimir Putin."

The efforts in the House infuriated Democrats, who pleaded with Republicans in the majority before quickly pivoting to turn their vote against the funding into a political asset.

Still, the Democrats there continued to press their case. A few hours later, Mr. Hoyer introduced an omnibus legislative package of more than a dozen bills — some of which are bipartisan — to fight against Russia on several fronts.

White House Rejects Putin's Proposal To Interrogate Americans

By Dave Boyer

[Washington Times](#), July 19, 2018

The White House rejected Thursday a proposal by Russian President Vladimir Putin to allow Moscow to interrogate Americans, including former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul.

"It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it," said White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

Mr. Putin made the proposal Monday in a private meeting with Mr. Trump in Finland, offering to reciprocate by allowing special counsel Robert Mueller to attend

interrogations of 12 Russian military officers indicted by the U.S. for meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

During a news conference with Mr. Putin, Mr. Trump called it “an incredible offer.”

Said Mrs. Sanders on Thursday, “Hopefully President Putin will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt.”

On Wednesday, Mrs. Sanders told reporters that Mr. Trump would be discussing Mr. Putin's offer with his advisers. The apparent willingness to consider the proposal raised heated objections in Congress and in the diplomatic community, with some Democratic lawmakers introducing legislation to block such a move.

Mr. McFaul, the former ambassador to Moscow, has been highly critical of Mr. Putin's autocratic rule. Mr. Putin also expressed a desire to interrogate William Browder, a London-based human rights advocate and harsh Kremlin critic who has given up his U.S. citizenship.

A State Department spokeswoman on Wednesday dismissed Mr. Putin's proposal.

White House: Trump Opposes Putin's Request To Interview Current And Former American Officials

By Karoun Demirjian And John Wagner
[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

The White House says President Trump opposes a proposal floated by Russian President Vladimir Putin that would allow Russia to interview American officials in exchange for making Russian authorities indicted in special counsel Robert S. Mueller III's probe available for questioning.

The White House announced Trump's opposition Thursday moments before the Senate voted 98 to 0 to approve a resolution telling the president not to honor Putin's request, which would have exposed former U.S. ambassador Michael McFaul, among others, to Russian questioning.

“It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it,” White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement. “Hopefully President Putin will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt.”

The 12 Russians is a reference to those indicted last week by Mueller for their role in interfering in the 2016 U.S. election.

Putin first proposed swapping officials for questioning at a Monday summit with Trump in Helsinki, offering to make Russian authorities indicted in Mueller's

probe available for questioning — but only if the United States also granted Russian officials similar access to current and former American officials.

Trump called it “an incredible offer.”

The Senate resolution — which expresses the sense of Congress that no current or former diplomat, civil servant, law enforcement official, member of the Armed Forces or political appointee should be made available to Putin's government for an interrogation — is not binding on the president. The White House said earlier this week that it is considering the Kremlin's request, prompting a backlash from both Republicans and Democrats, and even members of the Trump administration.

In a news conference this week, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert called the idea of allowing the Russian government to interview American officials “absolutely absurd,” adding that allowing such a precedent “would be a grave concern to our former colleagues here.”

McFaul also tweeted his thanks to Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), who, along with Sens. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) and Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii.), drafted the resolution to insist that the United States reject Putin's request.

The resolution is expected to pass with strong bipartisan support, but it is unclear whether the vote will influence the president, who has spent the week shocking members of both parties with his varying comments about Russian interference in the 2016 election, indicating at times that he might take the denials of Putin over the conclusions of the U.S. intelligence community.

Before McConnell announced Thursday's vote on the Schumer-Menendez-Schatz resolution, Senate Republicans blocked two efforts to bring up resolutions affirming lawmakers' support for the intelligence community's assessment, the special counsel's probe into alleged ties between Trump and the Kremlin, and urge the president to take a harder stand against Russia.

Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who has spent the week mounting a fierce defense of Trump's outreach to Putin, objected to a proposal from Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), charging it was an affront to diplomatic efforts and a sign that “Trump derangement syndrome has officially come to the Senate.” Sanders shot back that his resolution had nothing to do with diplomacy and didn't even call for sanctions — but failed to secure a vote on the measure to affirm the intelligence community's determinations about Russian interference.

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Tex.), the majority whip, also shot down a bipartisan proposal from Sens. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Christopher A. Coons (D-Del.) to insist the

president fully implement sanctions against Russia that Congress passed almost a year ago, arguing that it would be better to consider sanctions than an unnecessarily “symbolic” resolution.

“Symbolism is important, our agencies of government need to know that we stand behind them,” Flake retorted on the floor, promising to raise the resolution again and predicting that “ultimately it will pass.”

Neither resolution would have been binding.

In Reversal, White House Says Trump “Disagrees” With Putin’s Request To Grill Americans

By Deirdre Shesgreen And Caroline Simon
[USA Today](#), July 19, 2018

In an about-face, the White House said Thursday President Trump “disagrees” with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s request to grill American citizens in exchange for helping American investigators probe Russian interference in the 2016 election.

“It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it,” White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said in a statement Thursday.

On Monday, Trump called Putin’s suggestion an “incredible offer,” during a joint news conference with the Russian leader after their controversial summit in Finland. Sanders also said Wednesday that Putin’s request was being discussed, though she said there was no “commitment made on behalf of the United States.”

Trump’s reversal came just moments before the GOP-controlled Senate was set to vote on a resolution objecting to allowing the Russian government to question U.S. citizens.

Putin discussed his offer Monday at a joint news conference with Trump in response to questions about 12 Russians who were indicted last week for their alleged role in trying to sway the 2016 presidential election. The Russian leader suggested he would help U.S. investigators with that probe if his government could interrogate Michael McFaul, the U.S. ambassador to Russia under President Barack Obama, and Bill Browder, an investor who worked to uncover massive corruption inside the Russian government.

Both men have been sharp and vocal critics of Putin.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert called Putin’s offer “absolutely absurd,” and lawmakers seemed dumbfounded that Trump would be taking it seriously.

“Of course Putin wants to question Ambassador McFaul,” said Sen. Bob Casey, D-Penn. “He stood up to Russian aggression and promoted United States national security interests.”

Casey said it was “dangerous” to even “entertain handing over an American citizen to an authoritarian Russian government with no rule of law.”

On Thursday, Sanders called on Putin to turn over the 12 Russians so they can stand trial in the U.S., an unlikely scenario.

White House Invites Putin To Washington For Fall Meeting

By Zeke Miller, Ken Thomas And Lisa Mascaro
[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

Unbowed by criticism over his Helsinki summit, President Donald Trump extended an invitation to Russian President Vladimir Putin to meet in Washington in the fall, the White House said Thursday.

Press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said on Twitter that Trump had asked National Security Adviser John Bolton to invite Putin, adding, “Those discussions are already underway.” The invitation was announced hours after the president tweeted that he looked forward to “our second meeting” as he defended his performance Monday at the summit in which the two leaders conferred on a range of issues, including terrorism, Israeli security, nuclear proliferation and North Korea.

“There are many answers, some easy and some hard, to these problems ... but they can ALL be solved!” Trump tweeted.

The announcement of the invitation came as the White House sought to clean up days of confounding statements on Russian interference in the 2016 election that sent Trump to the presidency. Trump’s public doubting of Russia’s responsibility in a joint news conference with Putin on Monday provoked withering criticism from Democrats and Republicans alike and forced the president to make a rare public admission of error.

The White House says President Donald Trump believes Russia would target U.S. elections again, saying the “threat still exists.” That comes hours after Trump appeared to deny Russia was still targeting the United States. (July 18)

On Thursday, the White House said Trump “disagrees” with Putin’s offer to swap the questioning of 12 Russians accused of 2016 election interference for an interview with the former U.S. ambassador.

The White House retreated from what Trump had called Putin’s “incredible offer” during the Helsinki summit, revising its position just before the Senate voted

overwhelmingly against the plan. It was Congress' first formal rebuke of Trump's actions from the summit and its aftermath.

Sanders said Putin's proposal was "made in sincerity," but Trump "disagrees with it." She said the U.S. hopes Putin will have the indicted Russians "come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt."

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Trump To Invite Putin To Washington As Top Advisers Seek Details Of Their Summit Talks

By Mark Landler

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump plans to invite President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to Washington for another meeting in the fall, officials said Thursday, even as Mr. Trump's top advisers groped for details of what the two leaders discussed in their last meeting in Helsinki, Finland.

Mr. Trump's director of national intelligence, Dan Coats, acknowledged frustration at being kept in the dark about the meeting, which included only the leaders and their respective interpreters. "If he had asked me how that ought to be conducted," Mr. Coats said at a security conference in Aspen, Colo., "I would have suggested a different way. It is what it is."

As the questions mounted, the White House rejected a proposal by Mr. Putin to question American citizens, including a former ambassador to Moscow, Michael A. McFaul, in return for giving the United States access to 12 Russian military intelligence officers indicted for their role in trying to sabotage the 2016 election.

That reversed its statement a day earlier that Mr. Trump was still open to the idea. Diplomats and other former officials expressed outrage that Mr. Trump would consider turning over Americans to Mr. Putin as part of a politically motivated case against William F. Browder, an American-born financier critical of the Russian president.

"It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it," the press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, said in a statement. "Hopefully, President Putin will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt."

On Monday, after meeting Mr. Putin in Helsinki, Finland, Mr. Trump praised his proposal as an "incredible offer." Two days later, Ms. Sanders said Mr. Trump still viewed it as an "interesting idea" and was discussing it with his staff.

But other officials recoiled at the idea of turning over Americans to Russia, and insisted that the proposal had not gained traction within the government. The State Department dismissed the allegations against Mr. McFaul and the other Americans as "absurd."

It was the latest attempt by the White House to clean up statements by and about Mr. Trump's meeting with Mr. Putin, which has left a murky trail of unanswered questions about what the two leaders agreed to in their two-and-a-half-hour session, when only their interpreters were in the room with them.

Mr. Putin apparently offered a deal in which Russia would allow the special counsel in the Russia investigation, Robert S. Mueller III, to question the 12 intelligence officers accused last week of hacking the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton's campaign during the 2016 election.

In return, Mr. Putin asked Mr. Trump for access to a list of Americans he claimed were involved in illegal dealings with Mr. Browder, who was blacklisted and convicted of tax evasion by Russia after he campaigned against corruption in Russian companies.

"He didn't commit to anything," Ms. Sanders said on Wednesday. "He wants to work with his team and determine whether there's any validity that would be helpful to the process."

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a much stronger rejection than the president's secondhand one, saying flatly of the idea of sending Mr. McFaul or other Americans to Russia for interrogation: "Yeah, that's not going to happen."

"The administration is not going to send, force Americans to travel to Russia to be interrogated by Vladimir Putin and his team," Mr. Pompeo said in an interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network that is slated to air on Friday, according to excerpts released on Thursday.

Among those on Mr. Putin's list is Mr. McFaul, who served in the White House and as ambassador to Russia under President Barack Obama, as well as current and former officials from the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and the intelligence agencies.

Mr. McFaul, a Stanford professor and Russia scholar, was critical of Mr. Putin and the Russian government during his tour in Moscow, and he has continued to write and speak about Russia. He described the proposal as "absolutely outrageous," and said it was merely an attempt to intimidate him.

"What they're doing is allowing a moral equivalency between a legitimate indictment of 12 Russian military intelligence officers for interfering in our election with a cockamamie, crazy story that it sounds

like Putin spun to our president in Helsinki,” Mr. McFaul said.

Mr. McFaul mounted a vigorous campaign on Twitter and in interviews, and drew support from a wide range of prominent figures. Mrs. Clinton, a former secretary of state, said on Twitter: “Ambassador McFaul is a patriot who spent his career standing up for America. To see the White House even hesitate to defend a diplomat is deeply troubling.”

On Monday, President Trump continued to cast doubt on Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election, the consensus position of American intelligence agencies and both parties on Capitol Hill.

Four Democratic senators called for the Senate to pass a resolution demanding that the White House reject Mr. Putin's proposal. “That President Trump would even consider handing over a former U.S. ambassador to Putin and his cronies for interrogation is bewildering,” said the Senate Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer of New York.

Legal experts said Mr. Trump had no authority to turn over Mr. McFaul or any of the other Americans, or even to force them to face Russian questioning. The United States does not have an extradition treaty with Russia. Under a mutual legal assistance treaty between the two countries, the Justice Department can reject any request relating to a case it deems politically motivated — a classification it has long given to Russia's case against Mr. Browder.

The State Department reiterated that view on Wednesday. “We do not stand by those assertions that the Russian government makes,” the spokeswoman, Heather Nauert, said. “The prosecutor general in Russia is well aware that the United States has rejected Russian allegations in this regard.”

But the names on Russia's list offered a telling glimpse into Mr. Putin's grudges, as well as how he might have tried to appeal to Mr. Trump.

According to a report by the Russian news agency Interfax, they include David J. Kramer, a former adviser to the State Department, now at the McCain Institute for International Leadership; Jonathan M. Winer, a former aide to Secretary of State John Kerry; and Todd Hyman, an official in the Department of Homeland Security.

What several of these people have in common is their involvement in or support for the Magnitsky Act, a law passed by Congress in 2012 that blacklisted Russian officials involved in human rights abuses. It was named for Sergei L. Magnitsky, a lawyer and auditor who worked for Mr. Browder and died after being beaten in a Moscow prison cell.

Mr. Putin and other Russian officials have long chafed at the Magnitsky Act — because the United

States can use it to target Putin cronies, because it is a potent symbol of the brutality in Mr. Putin's Russia and because Mr. Browder campaigned tirelessly for it.

Other names on Mr. Putin's list also have links to Christopher Steele, the British former intelligence agent who compiled a dossier alleging that the Trump campaign and the Russian government conspired to hand the 2016 election to Mr. Trump.

Mr. Winer, who served as the special envoy for Libya during the Obama administration, is a lawyer for Mr. Browder who knew Mr. Steele from his work on Russian organized crime during the earlier stint at the State Department. In September 2016, he circulated a two-page summary of Mr. Steele's findings within the State Department.

Speaking before the White House issued its latest statement, Mr. Winer said: “This is about harassment and intimidation by two people who wish to manipulate rule of law to go after one another's opponents. It's grossly abusive and in a rule of law country like the United States, it will go nowhere.”

White House Says It Won't Allow Russia To Grill Ex-diplomat

By Marisa Schultz And Bob Fredericks

[New York Post](#), July 19, 2018

Facing mounting bipartisan pressure, the White House said Thursday it would not allow Russian authorities to grill ex-US Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul and other Americans.

“It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it. Hopefully, President Putin will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt,” spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said.

The comment came amid growing bipartisan pressure, with the Senate passing a resolution opposing the plan advanced by Vladimir Putin at his Helsinki summit with Trump on Monday.

And it's another reversal by the administration, after the president had called Putin's idea an “incredible offer” on Monday.

“What he did is an incredible offer. He offered to have the people working on the case come and work with their investigators with respect to the 12 people. I think that's an incredible offer,” the commander-in-chief said.

The announcement came shortly before the Senate voted 98-0 to pass Sen. Chuck Schumer's resolution opposing the idea of Russians questioning Americans.

Schumer said the vote was still needed because the White House statement was not firm enough.

"Let this resolution be a warning to the administration that Congress will not allow this to happen," Schumer said on the Senate floor before the roll call.

"I call on President Trump to say once and for all, not through his spokespeople, that the lopsided, disgraceful trade he called an 'incredible offer' is now off the table."

Putin told the commander-in-chief that members of special counsel Robert Mueller's team could come to Russia for observe authorities there question the 12 Russian spies he indicted last Friday.

In exchange, the Russian strongman wanted his own people to have a crack at anti-Kremlin businessman Bill Browder, McFaul and nine others.

The White House had said Wednesday that Trump and "his team" were still evaluating the offer — but Trump changed his tune a day later, with the administration saying the president "disagreed" with Putin's suggestion.

A growing chorus of current and former officials and lawmakers had lashed out at the idea.

"It is outrageous that Russian prosecutors would seek to question a former US Ambassador. The White House should have immediately said they would never turn over a US Ambassador to the Russians," said Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ), a co-sponsor of the resolution.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) also scoffed at the notion of Russian intelligence officers coming to the US to grill Americans.

"Under no circumstances should #Putin officials ever be allowed to come into the U.S. & 'question' Americans on their list. I don't believe this will ever be allowed to happen which is why the @WhiteHouse should publicly & unequivocally rule it out," he tweeted.

McFaul, meanwhile, said on "Morning Joe" Thursday that "this isn't just about me — this is about American national interest. We can't allow this kind of moral equivalency when dealing with Vladimir Putin."

"Most shocking, and just lamentable, I think is my real reaction, when the White House was given the opportunity to categorically reject this moral equivalency between a legitimate indictment with lots of data and evidence to support it from Mr. Mueller with a crazy, cockamamie scheme with no relationship to facts and reality whatsoever, the White House refused to do that," McFaul added.

White House: Trump 'Disagrees' With Putin's Request To Question Americans

By Brett Samuels

[The Hill](#), July 19, 2018

The White House on Thursday backed off a proposal from Russian President Vladimir Putin to question U.S. citizens over alleged crimes in Russia after initially indicating President Trump would consider the matter.

"It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it," press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement. "Hopefully President Putin will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt."

The White House response comes after almost 24 hours of criticism from Democrats, Republicans and former diplomats that added to the hailstorm of criticism Trump has received over his meeting with Putin in Helsinki earlier this week.

It also marks the third time in as many days where Trump or the White House has walked back or clarified comments the president made in relation to his meeting with Putin that frustrated or flabbergasted lawmakers.

Trump on Tuesday had to reiterate his confidence in the U.S. intelligence community's assessment that Russians interfered in the 2016 presidential election after casting doubt on that conclusion the day before.

On Wednesday, Trump appeared to say "no" to questions about whether Russia still posed a threat to the U.S., prompting the White House to clarify hours after that the president was trying to say "no" to taking additional questions.

Sanders's statement on Thursday was issued less than an hour before the Senate, in a rare display of bipartisan unity, passed, 98-0, a resolution that warns Trump against handing over former U.S. diplomats to Russia.

Putin suggested during Monday's meeting with Trump that he would let U.S. law enforcement travel to Russia and observe the questioning of 12 Russian intelligence officials indicted in special counsel Robert Mueller's probe in exchange for Russian authorities being allowed to question U.S. citizens "who have something to do with illegal actions in the territory of Russia," including Michael McFaul, a former U.S. ambassador to Moscow.

Trump initially called it an "incredible offer" at Monday's joint press conference with Putin. His comments gained more widespread attention among lawmakers on Wednesday, when Sanders said at a press briefing that the president would discuss Putin's offer with his team.

However, the president appeared to be increasingly on an island in his consideration of Putin's proposal.

In an interview shortly before the White House reversal, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo bluntly shut down any consideration of Putin's request.

"Yeah, that's not going to happen," he said, one day after the State Department called the request "absurd."

FBI Director Christopher Wray chuckled when asked about the potential quid pro quo during an appearance at the Aspen Security Forum on Wednesday night.

"I never want to say never about anything, but it's certainly not high on our list of investigative techniques," Wray said, prompting laughter and cheers in the room.

On Thursday, Democrats, former diplomats and some Republicans seemed confounded that the White House would even consider the idea.

Multiple lawmakers and ex-diplomats acknowledged it was unlikely the U.S. government would make its own citizens available to Russians for questioning, but warned that the appearance of considering the offer sends a troubling message.

"The concept of allowing the Russians to interview a former ambassador of Russia, the United States ambassador to Russia is absurd. And the concept of letting American citizens be investigated for crimes that are just, I think are jokes, is absurd," Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) told reporters.

"I challenge you to find one member of the House and the Senate that believes this is a good idea," Graham added.

Rep. Adam Schiff (Calif.), the top-ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, called it "dangerous" to even entertain Putin's offer.

A group of House Democrats wrote to the president on Thursday, urging him to denounce the "preposterous offer" and saying it "defies belief" that the U.S. government would allow Russian investigators to conduct business on American soil.

"Certainly that would be a pretty phenomenal scene watching McFaul being put onto a plane to go interview in Moscow, or any Americans for that matter," said Rep. Tom Rooney (R-Fla.), a senior member of the House Intelligence Committee.

"I can't imagine that ever happening," he added. "So I don't think it is worth speculating on."

McFaul has been outspoken in the past 24 hours, urging the president to walk back yet another statement in the aftermath of his meeting with the Russian president and warning it damages his credibility in the diplomatic community.

"The president of the United States needs to come out and categorically denounce it. It's crazy. Maybe he doesn't understand it," McFaul said Thursday morning on MSNBC.

"I want to give him the benefit of the doubt, but now he needs to correct the record and stand up strong," McFaul added. "What the president doesn't understand, he looks weak in the eyes of Putin when he doesn't push back on elementary things like that."

White House Says Trump Disagrees With Putin Proposal To Hand Over Americans

Trump earlier called the proposal to have Russians interrogate a former U.S. ambassador and others 'an incredible offer.'

By Louis Nelson

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

The White House backed away on Thursday from President Donald Trump's prior openness to a Russian government request to interrogate Americans, including former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, bowing to a fresh round of outrage resulting from Trump's meeting with Vladimir Putin.

The Russian president, at a news conference with Trump on Monday, suggested that his government would allow the investigators from the office of special counsel Robert Mueller to interrogate the 12 Russian military intelligence officials it indicted last week if the U.S. would reciprocate by allowing the Russian government to interrogate certain Americans with ties to Bill Browder, an American-born financier who has lobbied heavily against the Russian government.

Trump called the idea an "incredible offer" during the news conference. And on Wednesday, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said that the president would "meet with his team" on Putin's proposal, setting off a Russia-related backlash against the Trump administration for the third straight day.

By Thursday, as the Senate prepared to formally rebuke Trump, the White House reversed course.

"It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it," Sanders said in a statement. "Hopefully President Putin will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt."

The Senate subsequently voted overwhelmingly Thursday afternoon to approve a resolution introduced by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) that the U.S. should "refuse to make available any current or former diplomat, civil servant, political appointee, law enforcement official, or member of the Armed Forces of

the United States for questioning by the government of Vladimir Putin.”

The resolution — which was approved 98-0, with all Democrats and most Republicans supporting it — was a bipartisan slap at Trump for even considering handing over the Putin critic, though it's still a non-binding measure that will not tie the White House's hands.

The White House's course-reversal marked the third straight day of walk-backs, either by Sanders or by the president himself. Trump on Tuesday told reporters that he had intended to say “wouldn't” instead of “would” at Monday's bilateral press conference when he said “I don't see any reason why it would be” Russia that was behind a campaign of 2016 cyberattacks intended to interfere in that year's U.S. presidential election.

Then on Wednesday, Trump told reporters that Russia was no longer engaged in election interference efforts in the U.S., contradicting his top intelligence chief, who has said such efforts are ongoing and prompting Sanders to claim Trump was not addressing a reporter's question when he said “no” during a White House pool spray.

Trump has been heavily criticized throughout his presidency, and before that his campaign, for what has been perceived as a relatively soft stance towards Russia. Trump has regularly spoken warmly of Putin, a former KGB agent, even as Russia has been accused of attempted assassinations on British soil and continues to occupy the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, fuel ongoing violence in Ukraine, and aid the regime of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. Even in its Thursday statement rebuking Putin's interrogation offer, the administration offered that the much-criticized proposal had been made with “sincerity.”

The reversal also follows fresh expressions of frustration from McFaul, who is among the 11 Americans who the Kremlin subsequently said it would like to question in relation to financial crimes it says were committed by associates of Browder.

“Most shocking, and just lamentable, I think is my real reaction, when the White House was given the opportunity to categorically reject this moral equivalency between a legitimate indictment with lots of data and evidence to support it from Mr. Mueller with a crazy, cockamamie scheme with no relationship to facts and reality whatsoever, the White House refused to do that,” McFaul told MSNBC's “Morning Joe” on Thursday.

“I hope somebody asks them another question today and they'll get it right today. We've seen a lot of that lately, that they want to have a take two and take three to get the message right,” the former ambassador continued, referencing the two notable reversals of

Russia-related remarks from Trump the White House has made this week. “But this is not just about me. This is about American national interest. We cannot allow this kind of moral equivalency when dealing with Vladimir Putin.”

Browder, who lobbied successfully in favor of a 2012 U.S. sanctions package against Russia known as the Magnitsky Act, also spoke out against the proposed interrogation swap on Thursday, telling CNN that it “is probably one of the most insane things I've ever heard coming out of [Trump's] mouth.”

“What President Trump was saying is that he wants to take a bunch of loyal patriots, people who have given up money for government service to serve their nation, who have been protecting this nation against Russian interference, Russia organized crime, and he wants to hand them over to the Russian criminals,” said Browder, who gave up his U.S. citizenship in 1998. “To hand me over to Putin is basically to hand me over to my death.”

While the White House had publicly said it's open to the idea of reciprocal interrogations, others, including the president's own State Department, have cast aside Putin's suggestion.

“What I can tell you is that the overall assertions are absolutely absurd — the fact that they want to question 11 American citizens and the assertions that the Russian Government is making about those American citizens. We do not stand by those assertions,” State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said at her press briefing on Wednesday.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in an interview recorded Thursday with the Christian Broadcasting Network, said “that's not going to happen” when asked about Putin's proposal. “The administration is not going to send, force Americans to travel to Russia to be interrogated by Vladimir Putin and his team,” he said.

Thomas Bossert, the president's former homeland security adviser, said on “Good Morning America” on Thursday that accepting Putin's suggestion would be “a significant mistake” and “galling.”

In the Senate, GOP lawmakers had also been quick to push the president towards rejecting Putin's offer.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), who sits on the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, wrote on Twitter that “Under no circumstances should #Putin officials ever be allowed to come into the U.S. & ‘question’ Americans on their list. I don't believe this will ever be allowed to happen which is why the @WhiteHouse should publicly & unequivocally rule it out.”

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) called the Russian allegations “jokes” and “absurd” and told CNN “I

challenge you to find one member of the House and Senate that believe this is a good idea.”

And former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, also on Twitter, said the need for the White House to reject the Kremlin's reciprocal interrogation offer is urgent. “The White House cannot let another day pass without unequivocally rejecting Russia's absurd request to interrogate @McFaul and other officials. Merely entertaining this idea betrays our diplomats, undermines our interests, and hands Putin yet another propaganda victory,” she wrote.

John Kerry, who served as secretary of state under President Barack Obama, wrote on Twitter that “The administration needs to make it unequivocally clear that in a million years this wouldn't be under consideration, period. Full stop,” adding that the proposal is “not something that should require a half second of consultation. Dangerous.”

Trump's openness to Putin's offer set off outrage and disbelief in the larger diplomatic community as well.

Dana Shell Smith, the former U.S. ambassador to Qatar, called out Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for not coming out against the idea. “The silence from Pompeo gives lie to his notion of ‘swagger,’” she said, referencing Pompeo's pledge to boost the department's morale.

“It's retrograde whatabout-ism. The State Department was right to condemn it. The White House was either too dysfunctional, or too inexperienced to do the same,” David Wade, Kerry's former chief of staff, said. “For American diplomats, this crosses a line from demoralizing to dangerous. To even hint that our Ambassador did something wrong by meeting with civil society leaders, you risk a chilling effect in diplomats doing their jobs in authoritarian countries... No administration should require a lesson or reminder in why that's a mistake.”

McFaul also said Russia's interest in interrogating him amounted to “classic whatabout-ism” from the Kremlin — matching Mueller's indictment with allegations of its own — and an “act of intimidation” against him personally. The former ambassador, now a professor at Stanford University, predicted he could face harassment from Interpol when he travels internationally and said Russia's interest in interrogating him will “create problems for me in the long run.”

He took particular issue with the president's remark on Wednesday — that the White House later sought to walk back — that the U.S. was no longer the target of Russian activities. “When he just said last night, America is no longer under attack, I'm sorry, I'm an American and I'm under attack by Vladimir Putin right now,” McFaul said.

More broadly, the former ambassador said the president's approach to Russia has weakened the U.S. in the eyes of the Kremlin and stoked concern within the diplomatic corps that their government might not protect them.

“It's scary. Diplomats are supposed to have diplomatic immunity. And to now have to worry about this,” he said. “It's the image of America. We look weak. We look like we won't push back on outrageous, crazy ideas. That is not even good for President Trump. I hope if you guys are listening, you look weak in the eyes of Vladimir Putin.”

BREAKING: White House Rejects Putin's Request To Interrogate Americans

By Katie Pavlich

[Townhall](#), July 19, 2018

The White House officially rejected a proposal from Russian President Vladimir Putin to interrogate Americans in exchange for the 12 Russian agents indicted last week by Special Counsel Robert Mueller.

“It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it. Hopefully President Putin will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt,” White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said Thursday afternoon.

The proposal came during President Trump's summit with Putin in Helsinki.

During the daily briefing Wednesday, Sanders said the idea hadn't been ruled out.

“He said it was an interesting idea. He didn't commit to anything. He wants to work with his team and determine if there's any validity that would be helpful to the process. But again, we've committed to nothing. And it was an idea that they threw out,” Sanders said.

One of the Americans Putin wants is former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul. The consideration of the idea sparked severe backlash.

Trump Rejects Putin Proposal To Let Russians Question Americans

President had said he was considering the idea, which sparked concern from Congress, former diplomats

By Peter Nicholas And Vivian Salama

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Trump ‘Disagrees’ With Putin's Plan To Interview US Officials

By Gabby Morrongiello

[Washington Examiner](#), July 19, 2018

The White House on Thursday said President Trump “disagrees” with Russia’s request to interview former U.S. diplomats and intelligence officers in exchange for letting special counsel Robert Mueller speak with Kremlin officials who have been indicted as part of his investigation.

“It is a proposal that was made in insincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it,” press secretary Sarah Sanders said in a statement. “Hopefully President Putin will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt.”

The statement comes after Trump said the proposal was an “incredible offer” during a joint press conference with Putin earlier this week. On Wednesday, Sanders declined to say whether the president was considering it.

“There was some conversation about it, but there wasn’t a commitment made on behalf of the United States. And the president will work with his team, and we’ll let you know if there’s an announcement on that front,” Sanders had said.

[Russia: Mueller trying to sabotage Trump-Putin summit]

The possibility that Trump would allow the Russian government to interrogate former U.S. officials like Ambassador Michael McFaul drew the ire of bipartisan lawmakers and State Department officials.

“The administration needs to make it unequivocally clear that in a million years this wouldn’t be under consideration,” former Secretary of State John Kerry tweeted Wednesday.

“When the White House was given the opportunity to categorically reject this moral equivalency between a legitimate indictment with lots of data and evidence to support it from Mr. Mueller with a crazy, cockamamie scheme with no relationship to facts and reality whatsoever, the White House refused to do that,” McFaul told MSNBC earlier Thursday.

Mueller indicted 12 Russian military intelligence officials last week over their involvement in cyberattacks against U.S. institutions during the 2016 election. Trump, however, said at his press conference with Putin it was unlikely the individuals charged would be extradited to the U.S. to face prosecution.

Trump Rejects Putin’s Request To Interrogate Ambassador McFaul, The Former U.S. Envoy To Russia

By Eli Stokols

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump, after coming under fire for even considering the idea, on Thursday decided not to allow Russia to interrogate a former U.S. ambassador and other Americans, as Russia’s President Vladimir Putin proposed during their summit in Helsinki.

“It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it,” Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement.

Putin had floated the idea as part of a swap, under which he would allow 12 Russian operatives indicted last week in special counsel Robert S. Mueller III’s investigation of Moscow’s election interference to be questioned by Russian officials, with U.S. investigators present — only if the U.S. gave Russia access to a dozen Americans it accuses of crimes, including the former U.S. Ambassador to Russia under President Obama, Michael McFaul.

In her statement, Sanders expressed hope that despite Trump’s belated rejection of Putin’s request, he “will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt.”

Trump, as he stood beside Putin on Monday at their summit, labeled the Russian’s proposal an “incredible offer.” On Wednesday, Sanders confirmed that the president was considering the idea of letting Russians interrogate McFaul and others, provoking broad outrage across Washington. The State Department on Wednesday dismissed Russia’s allegations as “absurd.”

Republicans as well Democrats objected that Trump hadn’t immediately rejected Putin’s request, signaling that agreeing to such a proposal could be a red line for Congress.

“Under no circumstances should #Putin officials ever be allowed to come into the U.S. & ‘question’ Americans on their list,” Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) wrote in a tweet Thursday, hours before the White House announced Trump’s decision.

The new dispute between Trump and Putin came as the two leaders otherwise offered remarkably similar takes on their summit, both insisting that it was a success and attacking American media and Trump investigators for standing in the way of U.S.-Russia cooperation.

Trump’s decision rejecting the law enforcement swap made for a third straight day in which he hedged or reversed himself on some of his public statements at the summit. By Thursday, he also was presenting a tougher stance toward Putin than he displayed while standing beside the Russian, to mollify critics in both parties —

even as he again took swipes at the widely negative coverage.

Early Thursday, Trump tweeted that the summit “was a great success, except with the real enemy of the people, the Fake News Media.”

Trump claimed that the media “are pushing so recklessly hard and hate the fact that I’ll probably have a good relationship with Putin.” He went so far as to say that the media badly wants “a confrontation that could lead to war.”

Putin, in his first public comments about the summit, told Russian diplomats in a speech that relations with the United States had been “in some ways worse than during the Cold War” but their meeting put the two nations on “the path to positive change.”

“It is important that at last a full-scale meeting took place that allowed talking directly, and it was generally successful,” Putin said, according to Russian state news agencies.

However, there are “forces in the United States that are ready to sacrifice Russian-American relations for their ambitions in the domestic political struggle,” Putin added.

That seemed clearly an echo of Trump’s own complaints about the political cloud over his presidency: the special counsel’s investigation of Russia’s election interference and possible Trump campaign complicity.

Both leaders have claimed that their private, two-hour conversation yielded agreements in various policy areas, though by Thursday, the White House, State and Defense departments had been unable to provide details, with many officials professing to be in the dark themselves.

In a pair of tweets, Trump stated that he looks forward “to our second meeting so that we can start implementing some of the many things discussed.” He listed stopping terrorism, security for Israel, nuclear proliferation, cyberattacks, trade, Ukraine, Middle East peace and North Korea.

“They can ALL be solved!” he wrote.

Neither country has offered any specifics about particular agreements or future plans for bilateral collaboration. Some congressional Democrats have suggested subpoenaing the American translator — only the presidents’ respective interpreters were in the room for their initial meeting — to solve the mystery of what they discussed.

Republicans, who on the whole have been obsequious toward Trump, were quick to criticize him after he stood beside Putin and accepted the Russian’s denial of election interference over the unanimous conclusions of U.S. intelligence agencies.

While some Republicans eased up on Trump following his subsequent reversal and acceptance of his government’s intelligence findings, party leaders suggested they would consider additional sanctions on Russia amid ongoing concerns that it is attempting to interfere with the looming 2018 midterm elections.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said Thursday that he has directed two Senate committees to offer recommendations for measures “that could respond to or deter Russian malign behavior.”

FBI Director Christopher Wray, speaking at the Aspen Security Forum, an annual gathering of national security experts in Colorado, reiterated his belief in the conclusions about Russian election interference and even hinted that he has considered resigning.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, speaking at the same conference, also acknowledged that she “agrees with” the U.S. intelligence findings.

But she dismissed the idea that Putin, who acknowledged Monday that he wanted Trump to beat Hillary Clinton in 2016, did so on her boss’ behalf — as the intelligence agencies have concluded.

“I haven’t seen any evidence that the attempt to interfere in our election infrastructure was to favor a particular political party,” Nielsen said.

While Cabinet officials are wary of angering Trump, Republicans appear to be walking a political tightrope, responding to a potential national security issue but careful not to upset the president or his most loyal supporters, whose turnout will be critical to Republicans’ chances in November.

A new CBS News poll Thursday showed that only about a third of Americans approve of Trump’s handling of relations with Russia, but 68% of Republicans approve, illustrating the bind that GOP elected officials are in.

Putin Appears To Be Targeting U.S. Officials Who Worked To Sanction Russia

By Carol Morello, Tom Hamburger And John Hudson

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

Almost from the day he arrived in Moscow as the U.S. ambassador in 2012, Michael McFaul and his family were subjected to a campaign of surveillance and harassment.

According to McFaul’s book, “From Cold War to Hot Peace,” Russian authorities followed him to his son’s soccer game and outings to McDonald’s. They trailed his children’s bus to school and sat behind the family at

church. They slashed the tires of an embassy staffer's car and broke into the homes of other employees.

Embassy security officials advised McFaul there was only one secure room at the embassy he and his wife should use if they ever quarreled, because everywhere else was monitored by the Russian government.

Now, McFaul is one of 11 U.S. citizens a Russian prosecutor wants to question in connection with an investigation many U.S. officials say is bogus. The list is believed to include at least two other former diplomats, a congressional staffer, a CIA agent, a staffer for the National Security Council and two special agents at the Department of Homeland Security.

The State Department has called the request for the Americans "absolutely absurd," and the White House said Thursday that President Trump "disagreed" with the idea after initially declining to rule it out. The Senate voted 98-0 for a resolution calling on the administration to refuse making any officials available to the Russian government for interrogation.

[Putin's push to interrogate U.S. officials Russia accuses of crimes, explained]

What began as Trump's attempt to repair relations that had been deteriorating since the Obama administration ended up causing a bigger rift.

The fact he had even considered making Americans submit to questioning by Russian authorities sowed suspicion and outrage among current and former diplomats.

Russian President Vladimir Putin raised the issue when he met Trump in Finland this week, days after the Justice Department indicted 12 Russian military officers suspected of interfering in the 2016 U.S. election. Trump initially called the offer "interesting."

"It's flabbergasting why the White House did not shut this down immediately," said Nicholas Burns, a former under secretary of state for political affairs. "The president should have said at the news conference that he would not go along with this."

Many of the Americans on the list were involved in some way with the Magnitsky Act, a 2012 U.S. law that has imposed stiff sanctions against Russia for human rights abuses, or have been harsh critics of human rights abuses in Russia under Putin. The act has brought sanctions against many officials who are part of Putin's clique, and the Russian government stopped U.S. adoptions of Russian children after it was signed into law.

"Mr. Putin has a fixation on the Magnitsky Act," said Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-Md.), the act's lead author. "It clearly is something he's very much annoyed

about. That shows it's working. The fact he wants to interview Americans is outrageous."

For years, the Russian government has criticized and harassed Bill Browder, a wealthy U.S.-born financier who lives overseas. In 2009, his lawyer Sergei Magnitsky died in a Russian prison after alleging a massive fraud involving senior Russian officials. Browder made it his life's work to lobby Congress for the sanctions act named after the lawyer.

The Russian government has branded Browder a criminal and repeatedly placed his name on an Interpol wanted list, putting countries on notice to arrest him when he passes their border control.

McFaul and others on the list have raised concerns that Russia will report their names to Interpol as well.

"I'm not concerned about traveling to Western-allied countries, but I am concerned about getting snagged on a Russian notice or warrant in a Central Asian country, parts of the Caucasus or Turkey," said one person on the list, who is not authorized to speak about it publicly.

But they remain defiant.

"I am very proud to have played a supporting role with Bill Browder in advocating for the Magnitsky legislation, and would do it again, particularly given the appalling human rights situation in Putin's Russia," said David Kramer, who as president of Freedom House advocated for the law's passage. A former assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor, Kramer is among the Americans The Russians want to question.

Speaking over Skype to the Atlantic Council, Browder said he was "aghast" by White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders's remark that the president was considering the Russian request.

"Most of the people on the list of Americans are people ... trying to protect the United States against Russian malfeasance," he said, adding, "effectively Trump is considering handing them over to an enemy state."

The Russians also want to question Jonathan Winer, a former adviser to Secretary of State John F. Kerry who was active in developing the Magnitsky sanctions. Kramer and Winer played a key role in the drama around the dossier compiled by Christopher Steele, a former British spy. The dossier alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election and contacts between Russian agents and the Trump campaign.

Kramer traveled to London in late 2016, met Steele, received a copy of the dossier and provided it to his former boss, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz), who later personally handed it to then-FBI Director James B.

Comey. Winer prepared a two-page summary of Steele's information and gave it to Kerry.

Winer said he had feared that the White House review of the Kremlin interrogation request could undermine the American system of justice.

"It is a challenge to the fundamental way our system is supposed to work," he said. "I have no reason to believe this country will tolerate it."

DNI Dan Coats Has 3 Words After Learning Trump Invited Vladimir Putin To White House

By Rebecca Shapiro

[Huffington Post](#), July 19, 2018

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats seemed stunned to learn during a live Q&A that President Donald Trump invited Russian leader Vladimir Putin to the White House.

During a discussion with MSNBC host Andrea Mitchell at the Aspen Security Forum in Aspen, Colorado, the reporter interrupted their chat to announce the breaking news from the Trump administration.

"The White House has announced on Twitter that Vladimir Putin is coming to the White House in the fall," Mitchell said.

Coats paused, leaned in and asked, "Say that again?" as the audience erupted in laughter.

He continued, "Did I hear you ... ?" After another pause, he said, "OK. That's going to be special."

Earlier in the discussion, Coats continued to defend the U.S. intelligence community's finding on Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election, amid Trump's multiple comments this week to the contrary. He also talked about his public rebuke of the president on Monday, shortly after Trump refused to hold Putin and the Kremlin responsible for the election interference at a joint news conference in Helsinki.

"I was just doing my job," Coats told the audience of his statement that clearly said Russia's meddling in the 2016 election occurred and the foreign actor's "ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy."

On Wednesday, Trump answered "no" to a question from a reporter on whether Russia was still targeting the U.S. His press secretary later said that his "no" response was misinterpreted.

Intel Director Stunned That Trump Invited Putin To White House

By Bob Fredericks

[New York Post](#), July 19, 2018

"Say that again?"

"Ooookay."

"That's gonna be special."

On the #AspenSecurity stage, DNI Dan Coats reacts in realtime to news that Vladimir Putin will visit the White House. pic.twitter.com/aGeeBJ8k4d

— The Aspen Institute (@AspenInstitute) July 19, 2018

National Intelligence Director Dan Coats said Thursday he had no clue what happened in the one-on-one meeting in Helsinki between President Trump and Vladimir Putin — and was stunned to learn that the president had invited the Russian strongman to DC this fall.

"Say that again?" Coats said at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado when told of a tweet from administration spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders announcing the visit.

"OK. That's going to be special," he added, according to the Washington Examiner.

Asked if he knew what Trump and Putin had discussed Monday, the president's intel chief admitted he was in the dark.

"Well, you're right, I don't know what happened at that meeting," Coats said.

"I think as time goes by and the president has already mentioned some things that happened in that meeting, I think we will learn more. But that is the president's prerogative."

Trump has called the summit "a great success," but he has been vague about what he discussed with Putin.

Terrorism, Israel, nuclear proliferation, cyber attacks, trade, Ukraine, the Middle East and North Korea were among the issues they talked about, Trump said in a tweet on Thursday — without offering details.

Putin agreed the summit was a success and said on Thursday it "led to some useful agreements," without providing details.

With Reuters

The Latest: Intel Chief Surprised To Hear Of Putin Invite

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

ASPEN, Colo. (AP) — The Latest on National Intelligence Director Dan Coats (all times local):

National Intelligence Director Dan Coats was surprised to learn Thursday that Russian President Vladimir Putin had been invited to the White House this fall.

A moderator at the Aspen Security Forum, where Coats was speaking in Colorado, broke into their conversation to describe the invitation.

"Say that again," Coats said, cupping his ear.

He took a deep breath and continued, "OK."

Then he smiled and said, "That's going to be special."

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Thursday that President Donald Trump has asked national security adviser John Bolton to invite Putin to Washington in the fall.

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats says only time will tell if North Korea will be willing to give up its nuclear weapons.

He says the U.S. should not assume denuclearization will happen and says "trust and verify" should be America's mantra.

National Security Adviser John Bolton has suggested that North Korea could denuclearize in a year.

Coats said Thursday it is "technically possible" but "probably won't happen."

He notes that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has projected a longer time frame.

Coats says North Korean exports have declined dramatically, putting economic pressure on leader Kim Jong Un. Coats says the U.S. should try to negotiate with him.

National Intelligence Director Dan Coats says he wishes President Donald Trump had made different statements in Helsinki, where he appeared to give credence to Russia's denial of interference in the 2016 U.S. election.

But Coats says he was just doing his job when he quickly issued a statement Monday to rebut Trump's comments, which were made while standing next to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Coats is restating the U.S. intelligence assessment about Russian meddling and Moscow's "ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy."

He says he thought it was important to express support for the intelligence professionals he represents and he was happy Trump worked to clarify his statement.

Coats spoke Thursday at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.

National Intelligence Director Dan Coats' drumbeat of criticism against Russia is clashing loudly with President Donald Trump's pro-Kremlin remarks.

Trump's remarks after Wednesday's Cabinet meeting, where he appeared to deny the longtime U.S. foe was still targeting American elections, are just the latest in a growing list of statements that conflict with Coats'. His job is to share the work of the 17 intelligence agencies he oversees with the president.

Coats was banned from traveling to Russia in 2014 for calling out its annexation of Crimea, and he has

continued to raise the alarm on Russia since his appointment by Trump as intelligence chief in March 2017.

That's left Coats in a tight spot.

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Trump's Intelligence Chief On Upcoming Putin Visit: 'That's Gonna Be Special'

By Eleanor Mueller

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

President Donald Trump's intelligence chief mocked the White House invitation to have Russian President Vladimir Putin visit Washington this fall, telling a crowd, "That's gonna be special."

NBC News' Andrea Mitchell appeared to break the news of the forthcoming invite to Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats at the Aspen Security Forum on Thursday. "Say that again?" he retorted, to laughter from the audience.

When Mitchell started to repeat herself, he stopped her.

"I hear you," he said, laughing. "That's gonna be special."

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders announced via Twitter on Thursday that Trump asked his national security adviser, John Bolton, to invite Putin to visit Washington later this year.

Trump himself had teased such a meeting earlier in the day, tweeting that the gathering would give the pair the chance to "start implementing" some of the things they had discussed in Helsinki on Monday.

Coats said on Thursday that he felt the need to "correct the record" on U.S. intelligence, after a week in which Trump spent much of his time walking back various comments on Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Intelligence Chief Caught Off Guard By Latest Russia News

By Curtis Wackerle

[Aspen \(CO\) Daily News](#), July 19, 2018

Dan Coats, President Trump's Director of National Intelligence, was caught off guard Thursday when informed in real time at the Aspen Security Forum that President Trump intends to bring Russian President Vladimir Putin to the White House this fall, following Monday's controversial get together in Finland.

"Say that again?" Coats said when informed at the end of an hour-long interview by NBC News veteran foreign affairs correspondent Andrea Mitchell that the

White House had just announced on Twitter that Trump had invited Putin to Washington.

Mitchell repeated the news. Coats let out a long “Okaayyy.”

“That is going to be special,” he said.

Coats’ sanguine attitude about the challenges of heading up the nation’s intelligence agencies was on display throughout the session at the Aspen Meadows campus.

He said that he was not in favor of his boss meeting privately with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Finland earlier this week.

“Had he asked me” how to conduct the Helsinki meeting, “I would have suggested a different way, but that’s not my role, that’s not my job, so it is what it is,” Coats said, referencing the two-hour private session in Helsinki held by Trump and Putin with no other staff present besides translators. He acknowledged “that risk is always there” when asked if Putin may have secretly recorded the meeting. He also acknowledged that he was in the dark as to what exactly was discussed in the private session.

Regarding the planned fall meeting, Coats said that he would brief the president on the potential intelligence risks, as well as what Putin might be trying to achieve. He added that he would not suggest another one-on-one without note takers present.

“If I were asked that question I would put forward a different way of doing it,” he said.

Coats was in the news following Monday’s Putin-Trump press conference, when he reasserted the intelligence community’s consensus that Russia interfered in the 2016 election. That statement was in direct contradiction to what Trump appeared to say in the press conference, when he restated that Putin had denied interfering.

“I don’t see any reason why it would be Russia,” Trump said, regarding the election interference that involved stealing political figures’ emails and attempting to infiltrate state voting systems. The next day, Trump claimed he meant to say, “I don’t see any reason why it wouldn’t be Russia.”

Mitchell asked Coats why he made the statement backing up the intelligence community.

“I was just doing my job,” Coats said, adding he was driven by a desire to correct the record.

Dan Coats, director of national intelligence, speaks with NBC News correspondent Andrea Mitchell at the Aspen Security Forum on Thursday.

Daniel Bayer 2017

When he first met with the president upon being offered the director of national intelligence post, Coats

said he informed Trump that “there will be times that I have to bring news to you that you do not want to hear.”

But the job of the country’s intelligence professionals is to provide unvarnished, non-politicized information to aid in policy-making decisions, Coats repeated throughout the interview. His advice to intelligence professionals is to “keep you head down and go forward” whenever politics begin to swirl.

A former U.S. senator from Indiana, Coats said his current job isn’t necessarily fun, but it is meaningful and rewarding. His day starts with intelligence reports that often focus on what went wrong throughout the world in the last 24 hours. He looks to the sports page for good news, but the day often goes downhill from there, he said.

He remains concerned about the nation’s vulnerabilities to a “cyber 9/11” where the banking system or the power grid is compromised due to a malicious hack. How many might die in sub-freezing temperatures if the power grid in New England went down for a few days in January, he wondered.

He added that, in the case of North Korea, which President Trump said committed to denuclearization following a June summit, Coats holds firm to President Ronald Reagan’s “trust but verify” maxim.

“I’m now the verify guy,” he said, adding that it is not surprising that the North Korean regime might try to deceive the U.S.

Mitchell asked him if he had ever considered resigning. Coats declined answering the question directly, but said that “you ask yourself, why did you agree to do this in the first place, what is your intent and what is your responsibility?”

“Are there days when you think, whoa, what am I doing? Yeah, but there are a lot more days where you say the mission here is critical to be a part of, to be able to feel like you are giving something back to your country. It’s a reward ... that doesn’t come from a softer job.

“As long as I am able to have the ability to seek the truth and speak the truth, I’m on board.”

Curtis Wackerle is the editor of Aspen Daily News. He can be reached at curtis@aspendailynews.com or on Twitter @CurtisWackerle.

U.S. Security Officials Visiting Colorado Caught Off Guard By Trump’s White House Invitation To Putin

By Noelle Phillips

[Denver Post](#), July 19, 2018

President Donald Trump caught two of his top national security officials, who were in Colorado, off

guard Thursday when his press secretary announced plans to issue a White House invitation to Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

In Denver, FBI Director Christopher Wray was talking with police chiefs, sheriffs and media from Colorado and Wyoming when he was asked about the tweet from press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

"I just heard about the meeting as I was walking down the hallway," Wray said. "I'm going to wait until I get more of the facts."

In Aspen, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats was in the middle of a live audience question-and-answer session at the Aspen Security Forum when he was asked about the news. When NBC's Andrea Mitchell, the moderator, announced the breaking news, Coats leaned toward her and said, "Say that again. Did I hear you? OK. That's gonna be special," according to video footage on the security forum's website.

Both men were in Colorado because of the security forum, an annual meeting where government officials, experts and top security strategists gather to hold in-depth discussions on homeland and international security issues.

Wray spoke on Wednesday evening in Aspen and then spent Thursday at the FBI's Denver field office where he met with U.S. Attorney Bob Troyer and his staff, Denver's Special-Agent-in-Charge Calvin Shivers, field agents, state and local law enforcement and media.

In Denver, Wray did not address the ongoing criminal investigation into whether Trump and his advisers colluded with the Russian government to influence the outcome of the 2016 election.

But he said the FBI was working with multiple partners to prevent similar meddling in the 2018 mid-term elections as part of the Foreign Influence Task Force. That task force includes the FBI's counterintelligence, cyber, criminal and counter-terrorism units as well as agents on the ground at field offices across the United States.

"Our focus is on the threats," he said.

Countering any election meddling will require help from private industry, including companies that provide equipment for elections as well as social media companies where so much misinformation is planted and spread, Wray said.

"It's not a government-only response," he said.

While Trump has been critical of the country's intelligence agencies in light of the Russia investigation, Wray said morale at the bureau was in a good place.

"I actually think our morale is really just fine, contrary to what you might read or see on TV," he said. "What I try to keep people focused on is the work and the people we do the work for."

In his meeting with the police chiefs and sheriffs, Wray pledged to continue offering the FBI as a resource for local law enforcement and to continue participating in joint enforcement efforts such as the Denver Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Those partnerships are critical to addressing vexing and persistent problems, he said.

"Law enforcement has to be able to tackle these things together or we're in a world of trouble," he said.

Spy Chief Dan Coats Says He Doesn't Know What Happened In Trump-Putin Meeting

[CBS News](#), July 19, 2018

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said he still doesn't know what happened in the one-on-one meeting between President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, Finland. Coats made the comments in a revealing interview with NBC's Andrea Mitchell on stage at the Aspen Security Forum in Denver on Thursday, three days after Mr. Trump's widely criticized meeting and press conference with Putin.

The president appeared to side with the Russian leader over his own intelligence community's assessment on Russian election meddling. Although President Trump later said he had misspoken.

Coats said he hopes to learn more about the meeting, where only Mr. Trump, Putin and interpreters were present. "That is the president's prerogative. If he had asked me how that ought to be conducted I would have suggested a different way, but that's not my role, that's not my job," Coats said.

Coats said he felt the need to "correct the record" when he issued a statement Monday reaffirming that the U.S. intelligence community has concluded that Russia interfered in the 2016 election. The statement came after Mr. Trump appeared to doubt that assessment in the press conference alongside Putin.

"I was just doing my job," Coats said Thursday. The statement declared the intelligence community has been "clear in our assessments of Russian meddling in the 2016 election and their ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy, and we will continue to provide unvarnished and objective intelligence in support of our national security."

In the same hour in which Coats declared Russia to be the most aggressive state actor attempting to interfere in U.S. affairs, emphasizing the need to be "ever-vigilant" and "relentless," White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said that Mr. Trump has asked national security adviser John Bolton to invite Putin to the White House this fall.

In Helsinki, @POTUS agreed to ongoing working level dialogue between the two security council staffs. President Trump asked @AmbJohnBolton to invite President Putin to Washington in the fall and those discussions are already underway.

That appeared to be news to Coats. "Say that again?" Coats said when Mitchell announced the news at the end of the on-stage interview.

"Okaayyy," he added. "That's gonna be special."

That isn't the only thing Coats said he wasn't made aware of until the public was. Asked if he knew Mr. Trump would meet with then-Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak in the Oval Office in May 2017, Coats, with a long sigh, said that was probably not the best thing to do, and he wasn't made aware of that meeting ahead of time.

A few days ago, Coats said America's digital infrastructure is at a critical point, comparing the current moment to the one before Sept. 11, 2001 and declaring that the warning lights are "blinking red."

Mr. Trump, asked by "CBS Evening News" anchor Jeff Glor on Saturday whether he agrees with Coats' assessment of the risks of a cyber attack, said he didn't know if he did and would have to review that assessment. Asked by Glor again on Wednesday whether he thinks the threat is ongoing, Mr. Trump said he would accept Coats' conclusion.

When CBS News chief White House correspondent Major Garrett asked on Wednesday whether the president believes Russian meddling is happening, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said "not specifically," since "there's currently not an election today."

"Well, since there's currently not an election today, not specifically, but we certainly believe that we are taking steps to make sure they can't do it again," Sanders said.

Coats' remarks come hours after a Microsoft executive told the conference his company believes Russians launched a phishing attack on three midterm candidates. Microsoft executive Tom Burt declined to say who the candidates are, but his remarks Thursday emphasized what Coats has already said — that Russian meddling is an ongoing threat.

Coats on Thursday also declined to discuss whether he's ever considered resigning.

After a long pause, Coats said, "That's a place I don't really go to publicly."

'I Don't Know What Happened In That Meeting': Director Of National Intelligence

Coats Says Trump-Putin Summit Details Remain Unknown

By John Wagner, Felicia Sonmez And Karoun Demirjian

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats on Thursday acknowledged that he did not know what took place in President Trump's one-on-one meeting in Helsinki with Russian President Vladimir Putin, even as the White House announced plans to invite the Russian leader to Washington for a second meeting in the fall.

"Well, you're right. I don't know what happened in that meeting," Coats told NBC's Andrea Mitchell in an interview at the Aspen Security Forum. He said that while it was Trump's prerogative to decide how to conduct the meeting, he would have advised the president otherwise.

"If he had asked me how that ought to be conducted, I would have suggested a different way," Coats said. "But that's not my role; that's not my job. So, it is what it is."

Coats, who on Monday issued a statement standing by the U.S. intelligence community's conclusion that Russia interfered in the 2016 election, also said that he would have liked to have seen Trump strike a different tone in his extraordinary 46-minute news conference with Putin.

"Obviously, I wish that he'd made a different statement," Coats said when asked about Trump's remarks on Monday defending Putin. "But I think that now that has been clarified, based on his late reactions to this, and so I don't think I want to go any further than that."

The statement from Coats came as the White House announced that Trump had asked National Security Adviser John Bolton to invite Putin to Washington in the fall. Trump earlier Thursday had said in a tweet that he looks forward to a second meeting with the Russian president, without giving any further details..

"In Helsinki, @POTUS agreed to ongoing working level dialogue between the two security council staffs," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a tweet Thursday afternoon. "President Trump asked @AmbJohnBolton to invite President Putin to Washington in the fall and those discussions are already underway."

Trump told lawmakers this week he and Putin had made "significant progress toward addressing" key issues. U.S. officials have offered few specifics on what was accomplished on those subjects beyond what Sanders on Wednesday called "the beginning of a dialogue with Russia."

The president's longest encounter with Putin, a two-hour-plus session, included no other officials or note-takers, just interpreters.

In a brief speech Thursday to Russian diplomats in Moscow, Putin said the Helsinki summit had led to "useful agreements." Now, he said, both U.S. jobs and European and Middle Eastern security hang in the balance as Trump's U.S. opponents try to block the path to improving relations between Moscow and Washington.

"We will see how things go, as some forces in America are trying to belittle and disavow the results of the Helsinki meeting," Putin said. "We see that there are forces in the United States ready to sacrifice Russian-American relations for their own domestic political ambitions."

A day earlier, Russia's ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Antonov, told reporters in Moscow "important verbal agreements" were reached at the Helsinki meeting.

That includes preservation of the New START and INF agreements, major bilateral arms-control treaties whose futures have been in question, Antonov said. He also relayed Putin had made "specific and interesting proposals to Washington" on how the two countries could cooperate on Syria.

In the United States, the focus in the days since the summit has been on Trump's views on Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and the degree to which Russia remains a threat — as well as what was accomplished.

Earlier Thursday, Trump lashed out on Twitter about news media coverage of Monday's summit, which has focused heavily on Trump's refusal to publicly confront Putin about Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election.

"The Summit with Russia was a great success, except with the real enemy of the people, the Fake News Media," Trump wrote. "I look forward to our second meeting so that we can start implementing some of the many things discussed, including stopping terrorism, security for Israel, nuclear proliferation, cyber attacks, trade, Ukraine, Middle East peace, North Korea and more. There are many answers, some easy and some hard, to these problems . . . but they can ALL be solved!"

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....proliferation, cyber attacks, trade, Ukraine, Middle East peace, North Korea and more. There are many answers, some easy and some hard, to these problems...but they can ALL be solved!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 19, 2018

Meanwhile, the fallout continued on Capitol Hill.

Senate Republicans blocked two attempts to pass resolutions backing the intelligence community's assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 election, while insisting that the president cooperate with the Mueller investigation and take punitive steps against the Russian government for the threat it continues to pose.

Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) argued against voting on the first resolution, presented by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), saying that it was an unwarranted attempt to engage in diplomacy and that "Trump derangement syndrome has officially come to the Senate."

Sanders shot back, arguing that his resolution simply sought to affirm the intelligence community's determinations in the face of the president's equivocation and protect the sanctity of the special counsel's probe.

Sens. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.) also unsuccessfully attempted to secure a vote on a resolution throwing support behind the intelligence community's determinations and the Justice Department for Mueller's probe and calling on the president to fully implement the sanctions that Congress passed last year.

But Sen. John Cornyn (R-Tex.) objected, dismissing the bipartisan effort as needlessly "symbolic."

"Yes it's symbolic. The symbolism is important. Our agencies of government need to know that we stand behind them. That's what this is about," a visibly frustrated Flake retorted on the floor. He promised to raise the resolution again and predicted that "ultimately it will pass."

McConnell has already called on the chairmen of the Senate Foreign Relations and Banking committees to hold a new round of hearings on sanctions and other matters related to Russian aggression.

On Thursday, the Republican leader scheduled a floor vote on only one of the many resolutions being offered: a measure from Democratic Sens. Charles E. Schumer (N.Y.), Robert Menendez (N.J.) and Brian Schatz (Hawaii) expressing the sense of Congress that the United States should not make any current or former American diplomats, political appointees, troops or law enforcement officials available to Russian authorities for interviews.

On Monday, Putin raised the possibility of interviewing Russian officials indicted in Mueller's probe in exchange for granting Russia the same access to similar American officials. In the days since, Putin has

expressed a particular interest in interviewing former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul.

None of the resolutions offered Thursday would be binding.

Schumer, meanwhile, expressed exasperation on the Senate floor that so little is known about what took place behind closed doors between Trump and Putin.

He called for bringing in Trump administration officials who were present at the summit, including the interpreter who accompanied Trump in the private meeting with Putin, "so we all know what happened."

"Do we know if President Trump made commitments about the security of Israel or Syria of North Korea or any of the other issues the president said he discussed with Putin?" Schumer asked. "It is utterly amazing, utterly amazing, that no one knows what was said. This is a democracy. If our president makes agreements with one of our leading — if not our leading — adversary, his Cabinet has to know about it, and so do the American people."

The prospect of calling Trump's interpreter to testify generated some intense debate Thursday.

Flake advocated at least getting the interpreter's notes.

"I mean, when the Russian ambassador is saying that important verbal agreements were reached, we don't know what those are? I mean, how are we going to know what those are? The White House isn't saying."

Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, said he thought it would not be appropriate to interview the interpreter.

"I think we're moving to a precedent that unless some crime has been committed is unprecedented and just not appropriate," he said. "I will stand with anybody in my challenging of what's occurred around Russia. There's nobody that's been more concerned about that. . . If someone can convince me otherwise, I'd be glad to reconsider."

House Democrats introduced a package of measures Thursday dubbed "The Secure America from Russian Interference Act of 2018." Though Democratic leaders called for bipartisan support of the wide-ranging legislation, that appeared unlikely.

While Trump asserted that only the media has panned his summit with Putin, some of the harshest criticism of his performance in a joint news conference with the Russian leader has come from fellow Republicans.

On Tuesday, Trump sought to tamp down criticism of his performance in Helsinki by affirming his support for the conclusions of the U.S. intelligence community that Russia was behind the attack on the election.

Trump ignited another firestorm Wednesday by appearing to suggest Russia is no longer seeking to interfere in U.S. elections — prompting the White House to assert hours later his words were misconstrued.

In his remarks Thursday, Schumer blasted Trump for "all his walkbacks."

"Frankly, any post hoc clarifications cannot substitute or repair the president's failure to confront Putin face to face."

Vice President Pence, meanwhile, defended the administration's approach to Russia. During a speech in St. Louis, he cited a series of sanctions, expulsion of diplomats and other steps taken in retaliation for Russia's interference and other actions.

"We've met Russian aggression with American strength and action," Pence said.

US Intel Chief Unaware Of What Happened At Trump-Putin Meeting

By Kelly Cohen

[Washington Examiner](#), July 19, 2018

The director of national intelligence for the United States admitted that he is unaware of what happened in the one-on-one meeting between President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

When asked by NBC News' Andrea Mitchell about the two-hour meeting between the two men in Helsinki, Finland, on Monday, Dan Coats said: "Well you're right. I don't know what happened in that meeting."

"If he had asked me how that ought to be conducted, I would have suggested a different way," Coats said during the interview at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado. "But that's not my role, that's not my job. It is what it is."

Only translators were present in the meeting.

Coats said that as "time goes by," Trump will reveal more of what transpired in the meeting — though it is the president's prerogative to do so.

"That risk is always there," Coats admitted to laughs when asked if Russia could have secretly recorded the meeting.

During the interview, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a tweet that Trump asked national security adviser John Bolton "to invite President Putin to Washington in the fall and those discussions are already underway."

When Mitchell told Coats about the tweet, he replied: "Say that again?"

"Okay. That's going to be special," he added immediately.

Later in the interview, Coats said he was unaware that the White House had invited the Russian leader,

and said he would suggest they do not have another one-on-one meeting like that in Helsinki.

U.S. Intelligence Chief: 'I Don't Know What Happened' At Trump-Putin Meeting

By Reuters Staff

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Republicans Block Subpoena For Helsinki Summit Translator

By Lisa Mascaro

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee have blocked a move to subpoena the American translator from the Helsinki summit to testify about the private talks between President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The panel's top Democrat, Rep. Adam Schiff, said Thursday he wanted the translator, who works for the State Department, to appear in closed session, saying Congress must "find out what was said" during the two-hour meeting.

"It is incumbent on us, given what the president said publicly that was of such great concern to our country, to our NATO allies, that we find out what was said privately," Schiff said.

The California lawmaker said he realizes it's an "extraordinary" step to subpoena the interpreter, but added it's also extraordinary for the president to meet alone with a U.S. adversary.

Senate Democrats have been pushing for testimony from the interpreter to determine if Trump made any deals with Putin during the session.

Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York questioned Thursday if any top administration officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo or Defense Secretary James Mattis, were given any of the details about the meeting or informed of any military or security agreements that were made between Trump and Putin.

"It is utterly amazing, utterly amazing, that no one knows what was said," Schumer said. "This is a democracy. If your president makes agreements with one of our leading — if not our leading — adversary, his Cabinet has to know about it and so do the American people."

Schumer asked Senate Republicans on Thursday to bring the translator and top administration officials, including Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman, to appear before the Senate.

Republicans have set an open hearing next week for Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to testify at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The chairman of that panel, Sen Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), said he is opposed to pursuing the translator's notes from Trump's meeting with Putin.

"It just does not seem to be to me the appropriate place for us to go," Corker said.

Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, first raised the issue of calling the translator to testify earlier this week.

"Congress must exert its authority to be a check on the presidency," she said.

Shaheen called on the panel to hold a hearing with to determine "what was specifically discussed and agreed to on the United States' behalf."

She noted that the "is an official of the U.S. government."

In the House, the committee Chairman Devin Nunes of California led Republicans in a party line vote to table the motion. Nunes said a panel hearing on China was not an appropriate venue. The vote was 11-6.

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Intelligence Director Coats Caught Off Guard By Trump Inviting Putin To Washington

By Maureen Groppe

[USA Today](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON – President Trump's director of national intelligence said Thursday he will stay in his job as long as he can "speak truth."

The comment from Dan Coats came just days after he pushed back against Trump for siding with Russian President Vladimir Putin. And it came during an interview that was interrupted by breaking news that Trump has invited Putin to Washington.

"Say that again?" Coats said to NBC's Andrea Mitchell at the Aspen Security Forum.

Mitchell had been interviewing Coats live when she told him of the breaking news. The White House had announced on Twitter that discussions are underway for Putin to visit Washington this fall, as a follow-up to the highly controversial summit in Helsinki this week.

Coats grimaced.

"OK," he said, while laughing. "That's going to be special."

In Helsinki, Trump appeared to accept Putin's denial of interfering in the 2016 U.S. elections over what

Coats and the U.S. intelligence community has said are undisputed facts.

Trump said Putin “just said it’s not Russia. I will say this: I don’t see any reason why it would be.”

Hours later, Coats put out an unusual statement emphasizing that the intelligence community has been “clear in our assessments of Russian meddling in the 2016 election and their ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy.”

Trump has since said he agrees with the U.S. intelligence community’s conclusions about Russia’s 2016 interference and continued targeting of the U.S.

Asked by Mitchell why he spoke out, Coats said he was “just doing my job.”

“It was important to take that stand on behalf of the intelligence community and on behalf of the American people,” he said.

But now that the record has been corrected, and has been “discussed personally with the president,” Coats added, “I think it’s time to move on.”

Some commentators have urged Coats to resign to protect his honor and the honor of the intelligence community after Trump contradicted him by name as he stood next to Putin.

“As long as I’m able to have the ability to seek the truth and speak the truth, I’m on board,” Coats said when asked if he’s ever considered quitting.

After Coats’ remarks, the news site Axios reported that “sources close to Trump” were speculating about whether Coats would be fired.

Coats never directly criticized Trump during the extended interview.

But Coats made several candid comments that might not sit well with the White House:

- He said he would not have suggested that Trump meet alone with Putin in Helsinki, and there’s always a risk that Putin taped the meeting.

- He said he did not know in advance of Trump’s White House meeting last year with the Russian foreign minister and ambassador, at which Trump revealed highly classified information. The meeting, Coats said, was “probably not the best thing to do.” Though Coats also said he doesn’t view it as a “nefarious attempt to do anything,” noting that Trump is a president “who did not come through the system.”

- He described Trump as preferring his daily intelligence briefings to be oral, with charts and models. Coats said that the briefings always run over time as Trump asks a lot of questions.

- He said only time will tell if North Korea is willing to give up its nuclear weapons. But while Coats said the U.S. shouldn’t “go forward with the assumption that all this is going to work,” he added, “Why not give it a shot?”

- Asked about Trump’s recent comment that while he agreed Russia interfered in the elections, there “could be other people also,” Coats said it’s undeniable that Russia took the lead and “we need to call them out on that.”

In advance of Trump’s meeting with Putin, Coats last week delivered a warning of the potential for a large scale cybersecurity attack. He named Russia as the “most aggressive foreign actor, no question.”

Coats added Thursday that “it’s very clear that virtually nothing happens (in Russia) of any kind of consequence that Vladimir Putin doesn’t know about or hasn’t ordered.”

Coats’ recent public appearances are unusual in a job for which he has tried to keep a low profile.

“I spent a lifetime trying to get my name in the paper back at home so people would vote for me, remember the name when they went in the voting booth,” Coats said of the years he spent representing Indiana in Congress. “I have a job now where it’s just the opposite. I’d like to spend my lifetime not being in the paper.”

Pressed on whether he’s ever considered resigning, Coats said there are days when he thinks, “What am I doing?”

But there are a lot more days when he thinks about how critical his mission is.

“This is not a fun job,” Coats said. “It’s a meaningful job. But it’s not fun.”

More: White House says Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit Washington in the fall

More: Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin: This story isn’t going away

More: Trump’s interpreter: Should she be compelled to tell what she heard during private meeting with Putin?

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Even US Intel Chief In The Dark About Trump-Putin Talks

By Deb Riechmann

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

ASPEN, Colo. — Even Donald Trump’s intelligence chief doesn’t know what was said in the president’s one-on-one meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin this week in Helsinki.

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats was also unaware that Putin was being invited to Washington.

Coats made those surprise admissions Thursday in his first public comments since rebutting Trump’s

questioning of the U.S. intelligence assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 election.

Speaking at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado, Coats tiptoed around any potential conflict with his boss, but was upfront about some of his misgivings, saying that he wished Trump had made different statements Monday in Helsinki after meeting Putin.

Coats, who is charged with overseeing the nation's 17 intelligence agencies, also said that if he had been asked, he would have advised Trump against meeting Putin alone, with just interpreters.

"That's not my role. That's not my job. It is what it is," Coats said in a verbal shrug.

"I don't know what happened in that meeting."

Coats said he was just doing his job when he quickly issued a statement Monday after the president appeared to give credence to Russia's denial of election interference. In that statement, Coats restated the U.S. intelligence assessment about Russian meddling and Moscow's "ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy."

"I just felt, at this point in time, that what we had assessed and re-assessed, and reassessed ... still stands and that it was important to take that stand on behalf of the intelligence community and behalf of the American people," Coats said.

As he spoke, news was breaking out of Washington that Putin had been invited to the White House this fall. NBC's Andrea Mitchell, who was moderating the event, shared the development. Coats said it was news to him.

"Say that again," Coats said, cupping his hand over his ear.

He took a deep breath and continued, saying: "OK."

"That's going to be special," he said, prompting laughter from the audience.

Coats, who has criticized Russia for years, has had to clash loudly with Trump's pro-Kremlin remarks, leaving the soft-spoken spy chief in a tight spot. Asked how he deals with Trump's conflicting statements about Russia, Coats said: "This is the job I signed up for."

The former Republican lawmaker was banned from traveling to Russia in 2014 for calling out its annexation of Crimea. He has continued to raise the alarm on Russia since his appointment by Trump as intelligence chief in March 2017.

He said he understood what Trump was saying when he noted earlier this week that "others" could be to blame for trying to meddle in U.S. elections because other adversaries have the capabilities to do so. But he stood firmly with the intelligence assessment, saying it's

"undeniable" that Russia has taken the lead on this kind of interference.

"Basically, they are the ones that are trying to undermine our basic values and divide with our allies," Coats said. "They are the ones who are trying to wreak havoc over our election process."

As with other Trump administration officials attending Aspen, Coats was asked whether he ever considered resigning from what has been a volatile Trump presidency.

Coats didn't answer the question directly. He said when he has frustrating days, he reminds himself about why he agreed to accept the job and what he hoped to accomplish.

"As long as I'm able to have the ability to seek the truth and speak the truth, I'm on board," Coats said.

Trump has had a tense relationship with U.S. intelligence agencies since before he was elected — largely because of their conclusion that Putin ordered "an influence campaign" in 2016 aimed at helping the Trump campaign and harming his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton.

Earlier in the administration, Coats' voice was drowned out by the more outspoken Mike Pompeo, who was CIA director before Trump tapped him as secretary of state. Now with Pompeo heading the State Department, Coats has been thrust into the limelight as the voice of the intelligence community.

On other issues, Coats said only time will tell if North Korea will be willing to give up its nuclear weapons program.

Coats said U.S. intelligence on North Korea was significantly better than it used to be, but that the U.S. should not assume it will happen and that "trust and verify" should be America's mantra.

National Security Adviser John Bolton has suggested that North Korea could denuclearize in a year. Coats said Thursday it's "technically possible" but that it "probably won't happen."

Coats noted that Pompeo has projected a longer time frame.

He also said that North Korean exports have declined dramatically, putting economic pressure on North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. He says with that pressure on him, why shouldn't the U.S. go forward and see what happens.

Coats was asked if there is a risk that nerve agent poisonings in Britain that have been blamed on the Russians are possible in the United States. "It's a risk," Coats said of the poisonings, which Russia has denied. "The Russians do bold things, extraordinary things. ... If you think the Russians are trying to be a good neighbor — these are the things they still do."

On China, Coats said that the U.S. has to decide if China is a “true adversary or a legitimate competitor.”

Either way, he said the U.S. must stand strong against China’s effort to steal business secrets and academic research. “I think that’s where we begin to draw the line,” he said.

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‘I Was Just Doing My Job,’ Coats Says, Defending Russian Election Meddling Findings

By Connor O’Brien

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

ASPEN, Colo.—Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats explained on Thursday he felt obligated to “correct the record” when he issued a statement backing up U.S. intelligence findings that Russia meddled in the 2016 presidential election.

“I was just doing my job,” Coats said at the Aspen Security Forum.

Coats issued the statement following President Donald Trump’s joint press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, where Trump appeared to take Putin’s word that Russia wasn’t involved in election meddling.

“I just felt that at this point in time that what we had assessed and reassessed and reassessed and carefully gone over still stands and that it was important to take that stand on behalf of the Intelligence Community and on behalf of the American people,” Coats said.

Coats said he had a “good relationship” with Trump, but Coats’ comments Monday were nonetheless part of a series of contradictions between the nation’s top spy and the president over Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election and whether the Kremlin is still attempting to undermine the U.S. electoral process.

“Obviously, I wished he had made a different statement, but I think that now that has been clarified,” Coats said, referring to Trump in Helsinki.

“I don’t think I want to go any further than that,” Coats added.

Trump appeared to undercut recent statements by Coats on Wednesday when he said the Russian government is no longer trying to interfere in the U.S. political process. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders later attempted to walk back the statement, saying that Trump simply said “no” to answering additional questions from reporters and that he hadn’t said Russia wasn’t attempting to undermine U.S. elections.

Top U.S. intelligence agencies have unanimously concluded that Russia interfered in the U.S. elections to aid Trump and damage his Democratic opponent, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

The president appears to have finally endorsed the findings that Russia meddled in the 2016 election. But that acceptance came after considerable back-and-forth, including Trump’s willingness to accept Russian President Vladimir Putin’s denial that the Kremlin had meddled in the election.

After being widely panned for taking Putin’s side over the U.S. intelligence community during a joint press conference in Helsinki, Trump later chalked that up to an incorrect word choice.

Following Trump’s public siding with Putin over U.S. intelligence agencies, Coats, a former Republican senator from Indiana, issued a statement Monday backing the findings, underscoring the mission of the Intelligence Community “to provide the best information and fact-based assessments possible for the president.”

“We have been clear in our assessments of Russian meddling in the 2016 election and their ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy, and we will continue to provide unvarnished and objective intelligence in support of our national security,” Coats said in the statement.

In Aspen, other high profile members of the Trump administration have also reaffirmed the findings on Russian meddling. FBI Director Chris Wray said Wednesday that he still agrees with the assessment and that Russia continues to “sow divisiveness” in the U.S. political system. And Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said on Thursday that “Russia was absolutely attempting to interfere in our election systems,” but largely avoided discussing whether Trump benefited from Russian actions.

Pressed further on the Helsinki summit, Coats said he would have recommended against Trump meeting one-on-one with Putin and didn’t know what happened during the hours-long Trump-Putin meeting, with only translators present.

“As time goes by — the president has already mentioned some things that happened in that meeting — I think we will learn more. But that is the president’s prerogative,” Coats said. “If he had asked me how that ought to be conducted, I would have suggested a different way. But that’s not my role. That’s not my job.”

Asked about another controversial Oval Office meeting in May 2017 between Trump and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak, Coats said he had no advance notice.

While he said he didn't believe there "was any nefarious attempt" behind the meeting, Coats called it "probably not the best thing to do."

"I was not aware of that. I'm not aware of anything like that since," he said. "You have to understand you have a president who did not come through the system, came from the outside."

Pressed by moderator Andrea Mitchell of NBC News on criticism of the intelligence community, including from Trump, Coats largely brushed off questions of whether he has considered resigning.

"That's a place I don't really go to publicly," he said

"I've tried to retire twice. ... I failed both times," Coats said, referencing the two stints he served in the Senate.

As Coats concluded his interview, he was informed by Mitchell that Putin was being invited to Washington this fall. And Coats, responded, "Say that again."

"That's gonna be special," Coats remarked, drawing laughter from the audience.

Louis Nelson contributed to this report.

Intel Director Dan Coats Warns Of 'Cyber-9/11,' Tells Aspen Conference Russia Is One Threat Among Many

By Gregg Re

[Fox News](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump should have issued a more full-throated condemnation this week of Russian election meddling in the 2016 presidential election, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said Thursday at the Aspen Security Forum.

But, Coats added, Trump was right to point out this week that Russian interference is just one of many potential threats facing the country.

"I wish he made a different statement," Coats told his interviewer, NBC host Andrea Mitchell. "it's undeniable that the Russians are taking a lead on this."

"We're now learning about the dark side, and it's pretty ugly," Coats added. "What we see every day, against our institutions, against our military, against our financial services, against our critical infrastructure – stretching from those who have major capabilities of doing this, starting with Russia, including China. ... Add Iran into that, add ISIS into that."

Trump faced fierce bipartisan criticism for saying at a summit Monday in Helsinki, Finland, with Russian President Vladimir Putin that he didn't see why it would be Russia that meddled in U.S. elections – before later claiming he meant to say he didn't see why it wouldn't be Russia.

In the White House on Tuesday, Trump attracted more criticism for saying that it "could be other people also" who interfered with U.S. elections.

"I accept our intelligence community's conclusion that Russia's meddling in the 2016 election took place," Trump said on Tuesday, before adding: "Could be other people also. A lot of people out there. But there was no collusion."

Coats acknowledged that he did not "know what happened" during Trump's lengthy one-on-one meeting with Putin in Helsinki, including whether Putin had recorded the meeting.

Still, Coats suggested that the outsize focus on Russian interference risks blinding Americans to other, potentially more serious threats.

"I'm concerned about a cyber-9/11," Coats said. "Let's say you shut down Wall Street for a week. What does that do to the world's markets and people's investments? ... What about an attack on the electric grid in New England in January, that's sophisticated to take it out for three days. How many people will die?"

In a more light-hearted moment, Coats also assured attendees at the conference that the soccer ball that Putin hand-delivered to Trump at Monday's press conference in Helsinki did not pose a security risk.

"I bet that soccer ball's been looked at very carefully," Coats said, laughing.

And when Mitchell broke the news to Coats on stage that Putin is planning a trip to Washington, Coats did a double-take.

"Say that again?" he asked, to laughter in the audience. "Okay, that's going to be special."

Gregg Re is an editor for Fox News. Follow him on Twitter @gregg_re.

Coats Says 'I Don't Know' What Happened In Trump-Putin Meeting

By Nick Wadhams

[Bloomberg News](#), July 19, 2018

Donald Trump's top spy chief said "I don't know what happened" during a one-on-one meeting between the president and Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, then appeared surprised to hear the Russian leader was invited to Washington later this year.

Responding to a question at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado on Thursday, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats also said he wouldn't have recommended meeting with the Russian president alone, with only translators in the room on Monday.

"I would have suggested a different way, but that's not my role, that's not my job," Coats said. "So it is what it is."

The Trump-Putin meeting caused an uproar when the U.S. president, at a news conference alongside the Russia leader, appeared to give more credence to Putin's denial that his country meddled in the 2016 election than to the conclusion of Coats and the U.S. intelligence community that it did. Hours later, before the president landed in Washington, Coats pushed back, defending the intelligence community's conclusions and citing Russia's "pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy."

'Correct the Record'

Asked why he put out the statement, Coats said he believed he needed to "correct the record" and take a stand on behalf of the intelligence community to remind people that the U.S. assessment of Russian involvement still stood.

"Obviously I wish he had made a different statement," Coats said of Trump.

Since the summit, Trump has backed away from the comments he made alongside Putin, telling CBS News on Wednesday that "Dan Coats is excellent" and "I can only say that I do have confidence in our intelligence agencies as currently constituted."

Coats seemed comfortable not falling into lockstep with his boss on Thursday, offering other examples of differences with the president in response to questions.

He said he wouldn't have recommended inviting then-Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak and other top Russian officials into the Oval Office in May last year. The visit came a day after Trump fired FBI Director James Comey over what he later said was the bureau's continuing investigation into Russian election meddling.

Since the Trump-Putin meeting in Helsinki, Russian officials have said progress was made on a number of key issues from arms reduction to Syria. U.S. officials have had much less to say, and there's no known recording of the one-on-one meeting to refer back to.

'Call Them Out'

A 75-year-old former Republican senator and lobbyist, Coats said he told the president early in his tenure last year that his job at times would be to "bring news that you don't want to hear" because the intelligence community strives to produce unvarnished, non-politicized reports. He said his experience to date shows that Russia seeks to undermine basic U.S. values and "wreak havoc" over the elections process.

"We need to call them out on that," Coats said.

Asked what he tells his employees in the intelligence community when the president appears to question their work, Coats said: "We are professionals, we are here to provide professional service to our government. Just do your jobs."

At the end of the on-stage interview, NBC reporter Andrea Mitchell said she had breaking news. Coats winced visibly before Mitchell announced that the White House said on Twitter that Putin was invited to visit Washington later this year.

"Say that again," Coats replied, leaning in to better hear the statement. When Mitchell repeated the news to him, Coats leaned back and said, "That's going to be special."

Trump's Intelligence Chief Dan Coats Goes In On Russian Interference

By Geoff Earle

[Daily Mail \(UK\)](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump's Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats continued to stand firm on Russian interference in the elections, saying he wished Trump hadn't made his statement that he believed Vladimir Putin's denials.

But he was caught off guard in a live interview when told Putin was being invited to visit the U.S. in the fall.

'Say that again? Did I hear you?' he said upon learning the news, which White House press secretary Sarah Sanders announced on Twitter.

'Okay ...' Coats said, chuckling as he appeared to contemplate the prospects. 'That's going to be special,' he said, to laughs from an audience at a forum.

Coats once again criticized the president's statement in Helsinki as inconsistent with what multiple agencies have assessed.

'Obviously I wished he had made a different statement,' Coats said in an interview with NBC's Andrea Mitchell at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.

'But I think that now that has been clarified, based on his late reactions to this and so I don't think I want to go any further than that,' Coats said.

Coats' statement Monday reaffirming the Intelligence Community's analysis provided a stark rebuke to Trump, just hours after the president said he found Putin's denial 'powerful.'

By Tuesday, after congressional blowback and criticism from outside advisors, Trump reversed himself and said he meant to say that he didn't see any reason why Russia wouldn't – as opposed to would – intervene in the elections.

Coats acknowledged he has no idea what was said in Trump's one-on-one meeting with Putin, accompanied only by translators.

'Your'e right I don't know what happened in that meeting,' he said.

'I think we will learn more. But that is the president's prerogative,' Coats said.

Had Trump asked him 'how that ought to be conducted, I would have suggested a different way, but that's not my role. It's not my job. So it is what it is.'

He also tried to buck up intelligence agents who have been under attack from Trump.

'I say to our people also around the world ... I say to them we are professionals. We are here to provide professional service to our government,' he said.

'We need to keep our heads down we need to go forward with the wonderful technical capabilities that we have,' Coats said.

Trump brought up Coats by name at his Helsinki press conference with Vladimir Putin, then sided with Putin's claim that he didn't interfere in the elections.

Coats explained of his reasoning and his relations with Trump: 'We started a good relationship. I just felt at this point in time that what we had assessed and reassessed and reassessed, carefully gone over still stands. And that it was important to take that stand on behalf of the Intelligence Community and on behalf of the American people.'

DNI Dan Coats Calls Out Trump's Russia Comments At Aspen Security Forum

By Ryan Grenoble

[Huffington Post](#), July 19, 2018

Dan Coats, President Donald Trump's director of national intelligence, doubled down Thursday in his criticism of the president — specifically, Trump's apparent desire to downplay the matter of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

"I was just doing my job," Coats told an audience at the Aspen Security Forum in Aspen, Colorado, defending a public rebuke he'd issued on Monday after Trump claimed Russia hadn't targeted the U.S.

"As I expressed to the president on my third visit to the Oval Office as his adviser, I said: 'Mr. President, there will be times I have to bring news to you that you don't want to hear. But know that it will to the best extent be unvarnished, non-politicized, and the best our incredible intelligence community can produce.'"

Coats was speaking to moderator Andrea Mitchell, who noted that not only did Trump side with Russian President Vladimir Putin despite numerous well-substantiated assessments from U.S. intelligence, he went so far as to call out Coats by name. It was important to make that stand on behalf of the intelligence community, and on behalf of the American people. Dan Coats, director of national intelligence

"I just felt at this point in time that what we had assessed and reassessed and reassessed, and carefully gone over, still stands," Coats said Thursday. "And that it was important to make that stand on behalf of the intelligence community, and on behalf of the American people."

Trump has since sought to clean up his comments, saying he "accepts" the U.S. intelligence findings — though he's also walked back that stance.

Coats also expressed misgivings about Trump having a one-on-one meeting with Putin, saying he would've suggested a different format. "But that's not my job," he conceded.

Regardless of what the president ultimately believes, Coats said he himself feels a duty to stand by the findings of the intelligence community.

"I believed I needed to correct the record for that," he told Mitchell. "This was the job I signed up for and that was my responsibility. Obviously, I wish he'd made a different statement."

Spy Boss Coats, Once Eager To Get His Name Before Voters, Now Prefers The Shadows : NPR

By Ryan Lucas

[NPR](#), July 19, 2018

ASPEN, Colo. — As a member of Congress, Dan Coats liked to get his name in the paper. Now, that he's the country's top intelligence official, Coats said he prefers to stay out of the headlines.

But the director of national intelligence, who oversees the United States' sprawling spy agencies, has been front and center in the past week as he has pushed back against President Trump over Russia's interference in American elections.

Coats has made clear that American intelligence agencies stand by their assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. election, even as Trump has sent conflicting signals, most significantly when he appeared to accept Russian President Vladimir Putin's denials over the assessments of U.S. spy agencies.

Coats took the extraordinary step of publicly contradicting Trump shortly after the president's meeting with Putin in Helsinki, Finland, saying the American intelligence community stands by its assessment.

"My thoughts were that I needed to correct the record for that," Coats said Thursday at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.

"I just felt at this point in time that what we had assessed and reassessed and reassessed and carefully gone over still stands and that it was important to take

that stand on behalf of the intelligence community and on behalf of the American people.”

Coats said that since the president has come out and endorsed the U.S. assessment, and he now thinks it's time to move on.

Coats, a former Republican senator from Indiana who was appointed the nation's top spy last year, has emerged as one of the sharpest voices in the administration on Russia.

He said he still doesn't know what Trump discussed with Putin during the leaders' one-on-one meeting in Helsinki. And Coats was blindsided by the White House announcement Thursday that Putin had been invited to Washington this fall.

Coats looked briefly stunned on stage when NBC's Andrea Mitchell asked him about the invitation.

“Say that again,” he said. “OK. That's going to be special.”

Audience members here laughed.

He later confirmed that he did not know about the invitation beforehand.

Coats also said he did not know beforehand that Trump planned to host Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russia's then-ambassador to the United States, Sergey Kislyak, in the Oval office in May of 2017.

Trump's invitation for Russia's president this autumn raises the prospect that Putin could arrive in Washington during a midterm election campaign that Coats and FBI Director Christopher Wray both have said the Russians are trying to disrupt through disinformation and other ongoing active measures.

Intelligence Chief Dan Coats Criticizes Trump For Elites At Aspen Conference

By Joel B. Pollak

[Breitbart](#), July 19, 2018

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats told the Aspen Security Forum on Thursday that he wished President Donald Trump had made a different statement at his press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Helsinki summit on Monday.

Coats traveled to Aspen, Colorado, where the nation's elite gather annually to exchange ideas under the auspices of the non-partisan Aspen Institute. He was interviewed onstage by Andrea Mitchell of the left-wing cable news network MSNBC.

“I wish he had made a different statement, but I think that now that has been clarified,” Coats said, referring to the president taking Putin's denials of interfering in the 2016 presidential election seriously despite the assessment of U.S. intelligence agencies.

He noted that Russian interference had not changed the outcome of the election.

Coats had other criticisms for the commander-in-chief.

“If he had asked me how that ought to be conducted, I would have suggested a different way,” Coats said, when asked about Trump's decision to meet one-on-one with Putin in Helsinki rather than with advisers. “But that's not my role, that's not my job.”

He also said that it was “probably not the best thing to do” for Trump to meet with Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and then-ambassador Sergey Kislyak to the Oval Office in 2017. He told Mitchell that he had not known about the meeting beforehand.

“You have to understand, we have a president who did not come through the system, came from the outside, I don't think there was any nefarious attempt there to do anything — but that's history,” Coats added, in Trump's defense.

Asked whether he had ever considered resigning, Coats said: “That's a place I don't really go to, publicly.”

Coats also reacted in surprise when informed by Mitchell that Trump was working to invite Putin to Washington in the fall.

In Helsinki, @POTUS agreed to ongoing working level dialogue between the two security council staffs. President Trump asked @AmbJohnBolton to invite President Putin to Washington in the fall and those discussions are already underway.

— Sarah Sanders (@PressSec) July 19, 2018

“Say that again?!”

“Ooookay.”

“That's gonna be special.”

On the #AspenSecurity stage, DNI Dan Coats reacts in realtime to news that Vladimir Putin will visit the White House. pic.twitter.com/aGeeBJ8k4d

— The Aspen Institute (@AspenInstitute) July 19, 2018

In the wake of Helsinki, Coats's public assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 election was widely quoted in the media as a contradiction of the president. Asked about why he had reiterated that assessment this week, Coats said he was just doing his job.

Coats praised the president for his interest in his intelligence assessments, noting that briefings with him often ran overtime.

Joel B. Pollak is Senior Editor-at-Large at Breitbart News. He is a winner of the 2018 Robert Novak Journalism Alumni Fellowship. He is also the co-author of *How Trump Won: The Inside Story of a Revolution*, which is available from Regnery. Follow him on Twitter at @joelpollak.

Two Parallel Administrations: The President's Word Versus Everyone Else

[NBC News](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON — One aspect of what's made Donald Trump's presidency so jarring, so chaotic and often so confusing has been the two parallel administrations — what Trump says, and then what everyone else in his administration says.

Consider these examples when it comes to Trump's controversial meeting Monday with Vladimir Putin:

On interference in the 2016 election

Trump: "So I have great confidence in my intelligence people, but I will tell you that President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today," Trump said on Monday in Helsinki.

FBI Director Christopher Wray: "My view has not changed, which is that Russia attempted to interfere with the last election and that it continues to engage in malign influence operations to this day," he told NBC's Lester Holt at the Aspen Security Forum.

On whether Russia is still targeting the United States

Trump: "No." (The White House says this "no" from yesterday was in response to no more questions. But the reporters in the room said it was clear the "no" was addressing the question of whether Russia is still targeting the U.S.)

DNI Director Dan Coats: "I'm here to say the warning lights are blinking red again. Today the digital infrastructure is literally under attack," he said on Friday. (NBC's Andrea Mitchell interviews Coats later today.)

On Putin's offer for Mueller's team to interview the indicted 12 Russians in return for the questioning of Americans and U.S. residents who Russia believes have committed illegal actions

Trump: "I think that's an incredible offer," Trump said in Helsinki on Monday.

Wray: "It's not high on our list of investigative techniques," he told NBC's Holt, per our colleague Mike Memoli.

On the state of U.S.-Russia relations

Trump: "I hold both countries responsible," the president said on Monday. "I think that the United States has been foolish. I think we've all been foolish."

Ambassador Jon Huntsman: "I think the bigger picture is we need to hold the Russians accountable for what they did, their malign activity throughout Europe as well. That's a part of the conversation that needs to take place," he said on "Meet the Press" last Sunday.

On the Mueller probe

Trump: "I think that the probe is a disaster for our country... [T]hat was a total witch hunt."

Wray: "I do not believe special counsel Mueller is on a witch hunt. I think it's a professional investigation conducted by a man that I've known to be a straight shooter."

When observers ask why figures like Coats and Huntsman won't resign after Trump's performance on Monday, you have your answer: Despite whatever Trump says, these officials get to operate in a parallel administration — as if Jeb Bush or Marco Rubio were president.

Indeed, this is something that NBC's Benjy Sarlin observed during the 2016 campaign: Then-running mate Mike Pence was allowed to operate in a parallel universe: He released a statement praising the Khan family; he denounced name-calling; he acknowledged Barack Obama's birthplace before Trump did; and he released his tax returns.

So if it worked in 2016, we guess it can work in a presidency — at least when it comes to administration officials having to answer tough questions. But it certainly undercuts an administration's credibility for a president to say one thing and everyone else to say the opposite.

Another problem with these two parallel presidencies is what happens when the president is in a room by himself — without his top aides. Well, here's the Washington Post: "Important verbal agreements' were reached at the Helsinki meeting, Russia's ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Antonov, told reporters in Moscow Wednesday, including preservation of the New Start and INF agreements, major bilateral arms control treaties whose futures have been in question. Antonov also said that Putin had made 'specific and interesting proposals to Washington' on how the two countries could cooperate on Syria."

"But officials at the most senior levels across the U.S. military, scrambling since Monday to determine what Trump may have agreed to on national security issues in Helsinki, had little to no information Wednesday. At the Pentagon, as press officers remained unable to answer media questions about how the summit might impact the military, the paucity of information exposed an awkward gap in internal administration communications. The uncertainty surrounding Moscow's suggestion of some sort of new arrangement or proposal regarding Syria, in particular, was striking because Gen. Joseph Votel, who heads U.S. Central Command, is scheduled to brief reporters on Syria and other matters Thursday."

"Two weeks before his inauguration, Donald J. Trump was shown highly classified intelligence indicating

that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia had personally ordered complex cyberattacks to sway the 2016 American election,” the New York Times writes. “The evidence included texts and emails from Russian military officers and information gleaned from a top-secret source close to Mr. Putin, who had described to the C.I.A. how the Kremlin decided to execute its campaign of hacking and disinformation.”

“Mr. Trump sounded grudgingly convinced, according to several people who attended the intelligence briefing. But ever since, Mr. Trump has tried to cloud the very clear findings that he received on Jan. 6, 2017, which his own intelligence leaders have unanimously endorsed.”

NBC’s Ben Kamisar: “President Trump threw his weight behind Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp over Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle in next week’s gubernatorial primary runoff, a move that injects the president into the center of an ugly primary battle. Trump tweeted his endorsement of Kemp Wednesday afternoon, describing him as “tough on crime, strong on the border and illegal immigration,” similar language he’s used to endorse other GOP candidates this cycle.”

“There isn’t much of an ideological difference between the two GOP candidates, making Trump’s endorsement a notable one. It also puts him at odds with current Gov. Nathan Deal, who has backed Cagle. The final days of the race have been dominated by leaked audio in which Cagle described the primary as a contest to see ‘who has the biggest gun, who had the biggest truck and who could be the craziest.’”

TBT: 10 Things Dan Coats Will Miss Now That He’s Banned From Russia

By Niels Lesniewski

[CQ Roll Call \(DC\)](#), July 19, 2018

When Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats served as a Republican senator from Indiana, he was one of several officials sanctioned by Russia.

At the time, Coats borrowed a tradition from fellow Hoosier, comedian David Letterman, in offering up a top ten list of things he would miss after President Vladimir Putin banned him from Russia, as Heard on the Hill featured when it happened in May 2014.

10. I won’t be able to complete my granddaughter’s Russian doll collection

9. I won’t be able to compare the Bolshoi Opera House with the Palladium in Carmel

8. I’ll never learn the Russian name for our dog Hoosier

7. I won’t be able to ski on the slushy slopes of Sochi

6. I won’t be able to buy Marsha a Russian mink coat for Christmas

5. I won’t be able to counsel Duma members on how to say no to a President

4. I’ll have to cancel my tennis match with Maria Sharapova

3. I won’t be able to compare Russiaville, IN with Russia

2. I won’t be able to see if borscht really does taste just like pork tenderloin

And the number one thing Coats will miss after being sanctioned by Russia ...

1. Our summer vacation in Siberia is a no go

White House Official Grumbles That DNI Dan Coats Is ‘Going Rogue’

By Catherine Garcia

[The Week](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump started his Thursday off by tweeting his summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday “was a great success, except with the real enemy of the people, the Fake News Media,” a statement that CNN’s Chris Cuomo called “ugly” and “unoriginal,” but “most importantly...an admission that you hate your country.”

The phrase “real enemy of the people” was used as an “operative threat to murder the opposition during the French Revolution,” Cuomo said. Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong both used it, too, he said, adding, “America, the country you lead, was formed in defiance of strongmen, bullies, and the idea that might makes right. A free press is a metaphor for what makes America great, so you have now admitted that you are against what we are all about.”

Cuomo isn’t concerned over Trump’s tweet, because he knows the media is not the enemy, and is “perhaps the best check against the abuse of power that can lead to a Stalin or a Mao.” The person who should be worried is Trump, Cuomo said, because “do you really think the people will keep a president who hates what their country is all about?” Watch the video below. Catherine Garcia

Clapper: Intel Officials Showed Trump Evidence Of Putin’s Role In Election Meddling

By Justin Wise

[The Hill](#), July 19, 2018

Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said Thursday that President Trump was given classified documents in January 2017 that showed

Russian President Vladimir Putin was directly involved in Moscow's interference in the 2016 presidential election.

"We left very highly classified written documents which laid out in more detail the evidence that we had," Clapper said on CNN. "And so the fact that President Putin was directly involved and directly order this and that no big decisions are made in Russia any way without Putin — all that was laid out."

Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper: "More and more, I come to the conclusion that after the Helsinki performance and since, that I really do wonder whether the Russians have something on him. I think his behavior was just unbelievable." <https://t.co/K6HbHaZGpU> pic.twitter.com/gKMjSewlJA— CNN (@CNN) July 19, 2018

Clapper's comment comes a day after The New York Times reported that Trump was shown information about Russia's election interference at a briefing weeks before his inauguration. The Times reported that Clapper, former CIA Director John Brennan, former National Security Agency Director Michael Rogers and former FBI Director James Comey briefed him on documents that lead them to believe that Putin ordered cyberattacks to disrupt the election.

The Times noted that Trump was "grudgingly convinced" Putin ordered the interference.

Clapper, who served as director of national intelligence from 2010-2017, said on CNN that he remembers the meeting as a "reasonably professional exchange."

"But I do think there was skepticism from the get-go from that day to this day," Clapper said, referring to Trump.

Clapper later said he wonders "whether the Russians have something on him," based on the president's behavior this week.

The comments from Clapper come during a week in which Trump has made several remarks contradicting the U.S. intelligence community's unanimous assessment regarding Russia's election interference.

On Monday, Trump said he saw no reason why Russia would interfere in the presidential election — remarks he made alongside Putin at a joint press conference in Helsinki. Trump walked back the comment a day later, saying he misspoke, while adding "could be other people also. A lot of people out there."

When asked on Wednesday if he thought Russia is still targeting the U.S, Trump responded, "no." The White House later said he responded "no" to answering the reporter's question, not to the question itself.

Trump later said in a CBS interview that he holds Putin personally responsible for election interference.

"I do have confidence in our intelligence agencies as currently constituted," he said

Last week special counsel Robert Mueller indicted 12 Russian intelligence officers for their alleged role in hacking the Democratic National Committee.

A Theory Of Trump Kompromat

By Adam Davidson

[The New Yorker](#), July 19, 2018

The former C.I.A. operative Jack Devine watched Donald Trump's performance standing next to Vladimir Putin in Helsinki on Monday, and his first thought was, "There is no way Trump is a Russian agent." The proof, he told me, was right in front of us. If Trump were truly serving as a Russian intelligence asset, there would have been an obvious move for him to make during his joint press conference with Putin. He would have publicly lambasted the Russian leader, unleashing as theatrical a denunciation as possible. He would have told Putin that he may have been able to get away with a lot of nonsense under Barack Obama, but all that would end now: America has a strong President and there will be no more meddling. Instead, Trump gave up his single best chance to permanently put to rest any suspicion that he is working to promote Russian interests.

During a three-decade career in intelligence, Devine ran the C.I.A.'s effort to get the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan, and then served as the No. 2 (and, briefly, acting head) of its clandestine service. Along the way, he tangled with, and carefully studied, Russian intelligence officers. He was involved in two major hunts for American intelligence operatives who were secretly working for the K.G.B.: Devine was the supervisor of Aldrich Ames, the C.I.A. officer who pleaded guilty to spying for Moscow in 1994, and he oversaw the investigation of Robert Hanssen, the F.B.I. counterintelligence officer who confessed to being a double agent in 2001. Hanssen, for instance, was like Trump, narcissistic, with a broad set of grievances about the many ways that his special qualities were not being recognized. But, unlike Trump, he harbored those grievances quietly and found satisfaction in secretly upending the system in which he operated. Trump shows no signs that he can be gratified by secret triumphs. He seems to need everyone, everywhere, to see whatever it is that he thinks deserves praise. His need for public attention is a trait that would likely cause most spies to avoid working with Trump.

There is no need to assume that Trump was a formal agent of Russian intelligence to make sense of Trump's solicitousness toward Putin. Keith Darden, an international-relations professor at American University, has studied the Russian use of kompromat—

compromising material—and told me that he thinks it is likely that the President believes the Russians have something on him. “He’s never said a bad word about Putin,” Darden said. “He’s exercised a degree of self-control with respect to Russia that he doesn’t with anything else.” Darden said that this is evidence that Trump isn’t uniformly reckless in his words: “He is capable of being strategic. He knows there are limits, there are bounds on what he can say and do with respect to Russia.”

Because the word *kompromat* is new to most Americans, and has been introduced in the context of a President whose behavior confuses many of us, it is natural to assume that it must be a big, rare, scary thing, used in extraordinary circumstances to force compliance and achieve grand aims. But, Darden explained to me, *kompromat* is routinely used throughout the former Soviet Union to curry favor, improve negotiated outcomes, and sway opinion. Intelligence services, businesspeople, and political figures everywhere exploit gossip and damaging information. However, Darden argues, *kompromat* has a uniquely powerful role in the former Soviet Union, where the practice is so pervasive, he coined the term “Blackmail State” to describe their way of governance.

Kompromat can be a single, glaring example of wrongdoing, recorded by someone close to the Kremlin and then used to control the bad actor. It can be proof of an embarrassing sex act. Darden believes it is unlikely that sexual *kompromat* would be effective on Trump. Allegations of sexual harassment, extramarital affairs, and the payment of hush money to hide indiscretions have failed to significantly diminish the enthusiasm of Trump’s core supporters. But another common form of *kompromat*—proof of financial crimes—could be more politically and personally damaging.

Trump has made a lot of money doing deals with businesspeople from the former Soviet Union, and at least some of these deals bear many of the warning signs of money laundering and other financial crimes. Deals in Toronto, Panama, New York, and Miami involved money from sources in the former Soviet Union who hid their identities through shell companies and exhibited other indications of money laundering. In the years before he became a political figure, Trump acted with impunity, conducting minimal corporate due diligence and working with people whom few other American businesspeople would consider fit partners. During that period, he may have felt protected by the fact that U.S. law-enforcement officials rarely investigate or prosecute Americans who engage in financial crimes overseas. Such cases are also maddeningly difficult to prove, and the F.B.I. has no subpoena power in other

countries. If, however, someone had evidence that proved financial crimes and shared it with, say, the special counsel, Robert Mueller, other American law-enforcement officials, or the press, it could significantly damage Trump’s business, his family, and his Presidency.

Alena Ledeneva, a professor of politics at University College London and an expert on Russia’s political and business practices, describes *kompromat* as being more than a single powerful figure weaponizing damning evidence to blackmail a target. She explained that to make sense of *kompromat* it is essential to understand the weakness of formal legal institutions in Russia and other former Soviet states. Ledeneva argued that wealth and power are distributed through networks of political figures and businesspeople who follow unspoken rules, in an informal hierarchy that she calls the *sistema*, or system in English. *Sistema* has a few clear rules—do not defy Putin being the most obvious one—and a toolkit for controlling potentially errant members. It is primarily a system of ambiguity. Each person in the *sistema* wonders where he stands and monitors the relative positions of friends and rivals.

Gleb Pavlovsky, one of the leading political thinkers in Russia, is known to be an adviser to Putin and well connected to the power structure. In a 2016 article in *Foreign Affairs*, he endorsed Ledeneva’s *sistema* framework. Many observers imagine Putin to be some all-powerful genius, Pavlovsky wrote, but he “has never managed to build a bureaucratically successful authoritarian state. Instead, he has merely crafted his own version of *sistema*, a complex practice of decision-making and power management that has long defined Russian politics and society and that will outlast Putin himself. Putin has mastered *sistema*, but he has not replaced it with ‘Putinism’ or a ‘Putin system.’ Someday, Putin will go. But *sistema* will stay.”

Ledeneva said that the key to understanding Trump’s interaction with *sistema* is to look at the people with whom he did business. “Trump never dealt with anybody close to the Kremlin, close to Putin,” she said. “Or even many Russians.” Trump’s business deals, she told me, were with tertiary figures. *Sistema* is rooted in local, often familial, trust, so it is common to see networks rooted in ethnic or national identity. My own reporting has shown that Trump has worked with many ethnic Turks from Central Asia, such as the Mammadov family, in Azerbaijan; Tefvik Arif, in New York; and Aras and Emin Agalarov, in Moscow. Trump also worked with large numbers of émigrés from the former Soviet Union.

If there truly is damaging *kompromat* on Trump, it could well be in the hands of Trump’s business partners, or even in those of their rivals. Trump’s Georgian

partners, for example, have been in direct conflict with other local business networks over a host of crucial deals involving major telecommunications projects in the country. His Azerbaijani partners were tightly linked to Iranians who were, also, senior officers in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The work of Ledeneva and Darden suggests that Trump's partners and their rivals would likely have gathered any incriminating information they could find on him, knowing that it might, one day, provide some sort of business leverage—even with no thought that he could, one day, become the most powerful person on Earth.

Ledeneva is skeptical that Putin, years ago, ordered an effort to collect kompromat on Trump. Instead, it is possible that there is kompromat in the hands of several different business groups in the former Soviet Union. Each would have bits and pieces of damaging information and might have found subtle (or not so subtle) ways to communicate that fact to both Trump and Putin. Putin would, likely, have gathered some of that material, but he would have known that he couldn't get everything.

Ledeneva told me that each actor in sistema faces near-constant uncertainty about his status, aware that others could well destroy him. Each actor also knows how to use kompromat to destroy rivals but fears that using such material might provoke an explosive response. While each person in the sistema feels near-constant uncertainty, the over-all sistema is remarkably robust. Kompromat is most powerful when it isn't used, and when its targets aren't quite clear about how much destructive information there is out there. If everyone sees potential land mines everywhere, it dramatically increases the price of anybody stepping out of line.

The scenario that, to my mind, makes the most sense of the given facts and requires the fewest fantastical leaps is that, a decade or so ago, Trump, naïve, covetous, and struggling for cash, may have laundered money for a business partner from the former Soviet Union or engaged in some other financial crime. This placed him, unawares, squarely within the sistema, where he remained, conducting business with other members of a handful of overlapping Central Asian networks. Had he never sought the Presidency, he may never have had to come to terms with these decisions. But, now, he is much like everyone else in sistema. He fears there is kompromat out there—maybe a lot of it—but he doesn't know precisely what it is, who has it, or what might set them off.

Trump and many of his defenders have declared his businesses, including those in the former Soviet Union, to be off-limits to the Mueller investigation. They argue that the special counsel should focus only on the

possibility of explicit acts of collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russian government. This neatly avoids the reality of sistema. As Pavlovsky wrote, "Under Putin, sistema has become a method for making deals among businesses, powerful players, and the people. Business has not taken over the state, nor vice versa; the two have merged in a union of total and seamless corruption."

Ledeneva explained to me that, in sistema, when faced with uncertainty, every member knows that the best move is to maintain whatever alliances he has, and to avoid grand steps that could antagonize powerful figures; in such times, the most one can hope for is simply to survive.

'They Were In Charge, They Failed': Gingrich Blasts Comey, Clapper & Brennan For Bashing Of Trump

[Fox News Insider](#), July 19, 2018

Former GOP House Speaker Newt Gingrich said Thursday that President Trump made the biggest mistake of his presidency this week, but has still been tougher on Russia than former President Barack Obama "ever dreamed of."

Gingrich pushed back on Trump Monday after the president cast doubt on the U.S. intelligence community's conclusion that Russia hacked the DNC's emails in 2016 as part of a broader effort to undermine the election.

Trump later clarified the remark and told CBS News on Wednesday that he holds Vladimir Putin personally responsible for the meddling. Gingrich said he's glad Trump corrected the record and that he hopes Trump "learned something" from his mistake in Helsinki.

'Patently Absurd': Ingraham Rips Brennan, Dems for Trying to Strike 'Mortal Blow' Against Trump

"He was too enthusiastic. He spent too many hours with Putin," Gingrich said, proceeding to lay out the steps taken against Russia since Trump took office.

Gingrich called out former Obama administration officials James Comey, James Clapper and John Brennan for bashing Trump after they failed to stop the Russian meddling in 2016.

Clapper, the former director of national intelligence, said this week he continues to wonder whether the Russians have compromising information on Trump.

Former FBI Director Comey called on Americans to vote for Democrats, while Brennan, the former CIA director, said Trump's comments in Helsinki were "treasonous."

Gingrich said all three men do not want Americans to notice their failures and the “weakness of the Obama administration.”

“They were in charge of national security, they failed and they’re now hysterical trying to get us to look at Trump,” he said on “America’s Newsroom.”

Trump Tries A Familiar Tactic: Providing A New Story Line

By Katie Rogers And Maggie Haberman
[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump spent much of Thursday playing up his economic accomplishments and attacking his regular list of rivals, including Hillary Clinton and the news media, which he again called the enemy of the people.

As he tried to leave in his wake Monday’s news conference with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, analysts and critics spent the day wondering whether the misstep would create a lasting problem for him.

As they ruminated, supporters who had publicly called out the president this week for standing beside Mr. Putin in Helsinki, Finland, and saying he did not believe Russians meddled in the 2016 election, seemed to be pivoting. By conceding that he had misspoken on the issue, they hoped, the president had already wriggled his way out of yet another one.

“He is fine,” said Newt Gingrich, the former Republican House speaker who broke rank on Monday and called Mr. Trump’s comments at the news conference “the most serious mistake of his presidency.”

But intentionally or not, Mr. Trump was set on testing the limits of his ability to move on without consequences.

He took the extraordinary and risky move of inviting Mr. Putin to Washington. Discussions for a meeting in the fall were already underway, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, said on Twitter.

Mr. Trump was deploying a familiar tactic: barreling into the next news cycle by supplying the next bit of incendiary programming.

Mr. Gingrich dismissed the ire over Mr. Trump’s news conference this week with Mr. Putin — “For most Americans news conferences in Helsinki are transitory and fleeting,” he wrote in an email. But he did not answer a follow-up message asking him what he thought of Mr. Trump’s invitation to Mr. Putin.

The decision adds to a growing mass of questions surrounding Mr. Trump’s ever-vacillating stance on Russia, leading lawmakers, analysts and supporters to question whether the president, a master of diversion,

could be testing his own well-honed instinct to reset the news cycle and move on from consequences.

“Part of Trump’s ability to dodge bullets in the past has rested on his ability to change the subject,” Geoff Garin, a Democratic strategist and pollster. “And this time he’s changing his story instead of changing the subject. And we’re now several days into a very negative narrative on Trump’s conduct in his dealings with Putin.”

If aware of the risks he was taking, Mr. Trump, an obsessive over ratings and approval numbers, seemed unconcerned. Though a majority of Americans disapprove of how he handled himself in Helsinki, 68 percent of Republicans are sticking by him, according to a CBS poll released on Thursday. And a poll conducted by the news site Axios and SurveyMonkey showed that 79 percent of Republicans approved of the meeting.

Mr. Trump has generally met criticism over his behavior with the pugilistic response he has sharpened over his 72 years, first as the child of a wealthy real estate developer, a tabloid fixture, a reality TV star and now from his seat in the Oval Office. It has never stopped him — not for long, anyway.

“I think his willingness to double down in the wake of these events that everyone else sees as catastrophic is because he authentically doesn’t care,” Timothy O’Brien, the author of the 2005 book “TrumpNation: The Art of Being the Donald,” said in an interview. “He’s been insulated his whole life from the impact of his own mistakes.”

But Whit Ayres, a Republican pollster, noted that Mr. Trump’s base of support had endured through Charlottesville and the border separation crisis. “Politics has become so polarized that there is a powerful tendency to rally around our guy,” Mr. Ayres said, “and to defend our guy in the face of criticism from people we don’t like.”

But Mr. Garin, the Democratic strategist, said that by continuing to show a conciliatory side to Mr. Putin, the president was “making it harder and harder for Republicans to defend him with any real conviction.

“And that may signal to voters that there’s something different about this one,” he added.

With his invitation to Mr. Putin, the president again appeared in tune with the Russian president, who, in a foreign policy speech to Russian ambassadors, appeared to be channeling the views of his American counterpart.

“We see that there are forces in the United States that can easily sacrifice Russian-U.S. relations for the sake of their own ambitions,” Mr. Putin said. “Let’s see how the events develop, especially considering that certain forces are trying to disavow the results of the meeting in Helsinki.”

The shared desire of the two leaders for a closer relationship will almost certainly continue to create obstacles for Mr. Trump's defenders in Congress, who largely expect a harsher stance from the Trump administration — if not the president himself — on Russia.

After Helsinki, Representative Tom Cole, Republican of Oklahoma, was among those who pointed out that the president had made a misstep. In an interview on Thursday, Mr. Cole noted the difference between Mr. Trump's words and his administration's policies, and suggested there would only be sweeping concern if those policies changed.

"I separate administration policy, which has actually been pretty tough on the Russians, and presidential sentiment," Mr. Cole said. "I think the policy is going to stay tough."

Senate Fires Bipartisan Russia Warning At Trump

The Senate voted 98-0 to oppose giving Russia access to U.S. officials like former Ambassador Michael McFaul.

By Elana Schor

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

The Senate overwhelmingly approved a resolution on Thursday stating that the United States should refuse to make any current or former official available for questioning by Vladimir Putin's government.

The 98-0 vote amounts to a bipartisan slap at President Donald Trump, whose White House on Thursday reversed its previous openness to giving Moscow access to former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul and other longtime Putin critics.

But beyond the lopsided vote to pass the symbolic resolution, proposed earlier in the day by Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), it remained unclear if the Senate would move ahead on any substantive action in response to President Donald Trump's widely criticized appearance with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said after a meeting with Banking Chairman Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) and Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) that he had asked their two committees to hold hearings on the implementation of last year's bipartisan Russia sanctions bill "and to recommend to the Senate additional measures that could respond to or deter Russian malign behavior."

Routing the matter through those committees, however, promises to slow down action on any potential legislation ratcheting up pressure on Moscow after Trump's friendly overtures to Putin this week. The move

also could sap momentum for a bipartisan Russia sanctions bill from Sens. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) that some of their colleagues worry could unduly impact U.S. and European businesses.

Schumer, for his part, focused on lining up bipartisan opposition to Trump's consideration of a Putin offer that would allow his government to question McFaul and potentially others, including anti-Kremlin U.S. investor Bill Browder.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Wednesday that Trump would consider giving Russia access to McFaul and Browder in exchange for U.S. access to Russian nationals indicted for hacking the 2016 election. She later pulled away from the offer, made by Putin after he and Trump met Monday in Helsinki, saying Thursday it "was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it."

Even after that walkback, Trump's third straight since his controversial meeting with Putin, senators in both parties consciously pressed ahead with their vote on Schumer's resolution.

"This is one of those instances where having Congress speak is a good thing," Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) told reporters. "It's good that it's redundant to the decision the president's already taken, but I think it's still worthwhile."

Schumer announced his proposal urging bipartisan cooperation: "This body must agree on the importance of protecting our ambassadors," he said on the floor. Two senators were absent for the vote: John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Richard Shelby (R-Ala.).

Another symbolic resolution offered Thursday, from Sens. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.), would have put the Senate on record supporting U.S. intelligence agencies that have documented Russian efforts to sabotage the 2016 election and hailing the Justice Department for the work that led to special counsel Robert Mueller's team indicting 12 Russian intelligence officers for cyber-meddling last week.

Trump has repeatedly sought to discredit Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election as a "witch hunt."

The duo sought unanimous consent to pass their proposal on Thursday, but Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) objected for his side of the aisle.

The Flake-Coons measure is "purely a symbolic act," Cornyn said. "And what we need to do is not just offer symbolic resolutions on the floor; we need to do the hard work" of acting within Senate committees.

GOP Leader Blocks Resolution Backing Intelligence Community On Russia

By Jordain Carney
[The Hill](#), July 19, 2018

GOP Sen. John Cornyn (Texas) blocked a resolution on Thursday that would have lent the Senate's support to the intelligence community's assessment of Russian election meddling, which was offered up in the wake of President Trump's Monday meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Sens. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.) tried to pass their resolution by unanimous consent, which requires the sign off of every senator.

But the majority whip objected, saying senators should focus on passing new sanctions legislation and warning that they should work through the committee process.

"It is purely a symbolic act and what we need to do is ... do the hard work that senators have to do through the regular order," Cornyn said from the Senate floor.

He added that committees "ought to be permitted to call the witnesses and ask the hard questions and develop the record before we go on record as to a resolution like this."

The measure, introduced on Wednesday, would support the intelligence community's assessment that Russia meddled in the 2016 election days after Trump voiced skepticism about Moscow's election interference.

Flake blasted Trump's rhetoric during the Helsinki summit, calling it an "Orwellian moment."

"To reject these findings – and to reject the excruciatingly specific indictment against 12 named Russian operatives in deference to the word of a KGB apparatchik – is an act of will on the part of the president," Flake said.

He added that that the "choice now leaves us contemplating a dark mystery. Why did he do that? What would compel our president to do such a thing?"

"If ever there was a moment to think not of your party but of your country, this is it," Flake continued.

The resolution also commends the Justice Department for investigating Russia's election interference.

Trump has dismissed special counsel Robert Mueller's probe, which is also digging into possible coordination between the Trump campaign and Moscow, as a "witch hunt."

The resolution agrees with the intelligence community's findings that the Kremlin meddled in the 2016 election and that Russia should be held accountable; calls on the administration to fully implement the sanctions against Russia that Congress passed last year; and urges congressional oversight "including prompt hearings and the release of relevant

note and information" so Congress can understand the Helsinki, Finland, summit.

In addition to the Flake-Coons resolution, GOP Sen. Rand Paul (Ky.) blocked a separate resolution from Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) that also would have demanded Trump sit down with Mueller as part of his probe.

Trump sparked widespread backlash when he refused to condemn Russia's election meddling during the joint press conference with Putin on Monday. He tried to walk back his comments on Tuesday, saying he accepted the intelligence community's findings, but added that it could be "other people" as well.

Flake and Coons pledged after Cornyn blocked their resolution that they would try again to pass it in the future.

"We'll bring it back," Flake said. "I believe that this should pass, and I believe it ultimately will pass."

Republican Leaders Block Bipartisan Resolution Backing Intelligence Community

'My concern with this resolution is that it is purely a symbolic act' says Majority Whip Cornyn

By Seth McLaughlin
[Washington Times](#), July 19, 2018

Senate GOP leaders blocked a non-binding bipartisan resolution Thursday that would have put the chamber on record as standing behind the intelligence community and its findings that Russian interfered in the 2016 election.

The resolution, authored by Sens. Jeff Flake, Arizona Republican, and Chris Coons, Delaware Democrat, was offered in response to President Trump widely-panned trip to Helsinki where he publicly accepted Russian President Vladimir Putin's claim that Russian did not mess with the election.

But the effort flamed out after Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn, the No. 2 Republican in the Senate, stood in opposition — effectively killing the resolution under Senate rules.

"My concern with this resolution is that it is purely a symbolic act," Mr. Cornyn said.

The Texas Republican said Senate committees should be "permitted to call the witnesses and ask the hard questions and develop the record before we go on record as to a resolution like this."

Mr. Flake said he was surprised by the objection to the measure, which commended the Department of Justice investigation, which led to a recent indictment of 12 Russian officials, embraced the intelligence

community's conclusions, and called for Russia to be held accountable for its actions.

It also demanded hearings into what Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin discussed behind closed doors and for the enactment of sanctions against Russia.

Speaking on the floor moments earlier, Mr. Flake described the Helsinki summit as “truly an Orwellian moment” and slammed the president.

“What we saw earlier this week in Helsinki is what happens when you wage war on objective reality for two solid years, calling real things fake and fake things real, as if conditioning other to embrace the same confusion,” Mr. Flake said of Mr. Trump.

“Ultimately you are rendered unable to tell the difference between the two and are at critical times seemingly rendered incapable of thinking clearly,” he said.

Standing beside Mr. Putin Monday, Mr. Trump appeared to embrace Mr. Putin's denial of tampering in the election over the conclusion of the intelligence community, telling reporters that Mr. Putin “just said it's not Russia.”

“I will say this: I don't see any reason why it would be,” he said.

Mr. Trump later clarified his remarks, but that was not enough for Democrats and Republicans who were appalled by Mr. Trump's performance.

“The findings of our intelligence community regarding the Russian aggression are not matters of opinion — no matter how powerful or strong Putin's denial,” Mr. Flake said. “That choice leaves us contemplating a dark mystery: Why did he do that? What would compel our president to do such a thing?”

GOP Rejects Two Resolutions Affirming Support For U.S. Intelligence Community

By Igor Bobic

[Huffington Post](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON — Republicans on Thursday objected to doing the bare minimum in response to President Donald Trump's confusing stance toward Russian interference in U.S. politics, objecting to two nonbinding resolutions that affirmed the Senate's support for the U.S. intelligence community.

At a joint news conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday in Helsinki, Trump refused to condemn Russia's efforts to manipulate the 2016 presidential election, as detailed by his own intelligence agencies several times. Instead, he cast doubt on those assessments and in his comments gave credence to Putin's denial of the interference.

After his performance sparked bipartisan criticism, Trump struggled to clarify his position several times this week. In comments on Tuesday, he expressed support for the intelligence community and their findings on Russia. But he again sounded an equivocal note, saying that it “could be other people, also” who sought to tamper with the 2016 campaign.

In an interview with CBS News that aired Wednesday, Trump reiterated his backing of the intelligence findings on Russian interference, but again passed on taking Putin to task for denying such actions. “I don't want to get into whether or not he's lying,” Trump said.

The Senate on Thursday was asked to give unanimous consent to pass resolutions — which are basically messaging documents and have no force of law — as a way to challenge Trump.

The first, introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), expressed support for the intelligence community as well as special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russia's efforts to roil the election. Mueller's probe includes looking into whether Trump's campaign colluded with Russia, which has prompted the president to repeatedly disparage it as a “witchhunt” and a “disaster.”

The Sanders resolution failed when Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), a rare voice of support for Trump's actions during the summit with Putin, rose to object — as any individual member of the Senate has the power to do.

“The hatred for the president is so intense that partisans would rather risk war than give diplomacy a chance,” Paul said, arguing that a nonbinding resolution in support of the U.S. intelligence community could threaten diplomatic ties and put the U.S. on the path to armed conflict with Russia.

“We should stand firm and say, ‘Stay the hell out of our elections,’ but we should not stick our head in the ground and say we're not going to talk to them,” Paul said.

Sanders' resolution did not include language instructing the U.S. to cut off diplomatic ties with Russia.

The second resolution, introduced by Sens. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.), also affirmed support for the intelligence community and called for hearings on Trump's summit with Putin.

But it failed after Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) rose to object over what he called the “symbolic” nature of the resolution. Cornyn said it lacked “sting,” and argued that senators ought to consider additional sanctions on Russia in their appropriate committees.

“When we rush to judgment on resolutions like this we can inadvertently make mistakes,” Cornyn said on

the floor, a week after introducing a similar nonbinding resolution that expressed support for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

Flake agreed that substantive action was needed to confront Russia, but he insisted that the Senate also should express support for the intelligence community, given Putin's denials of interference in the 2016 election.

"We here in the Senate should say we don't believe it. We know the intelligence is right. We need to say that in the Senate. Yes, it's symbolic... [but] our agencies need to know we stand behind them," he said.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) called Cornyn's objection to the measure "a low moment in this body." He added that Republicans are too afraid of the president to stand up for the U.S. intelligence community.

Republican leaders did agree to a vote on a resolution offered by Schumer opposing Putin's proposal to allow Russian prosecutors to interview certain U.S. citizens, including a former ambassador to Russia, about possible criminal matters.

Although U.S. officials have said allegations broached by Putin have no merit, the White House on Wednesday did not rule out considering the proposal. On Thursday, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders issued a statement saying Trump "disagrees" with the Putin request.

Schumer's resolution passed, 98-0.

This story has been updated with details on the Schumer resolution.

Republicans Block Subpoena For Helsinki Summit Translator

By Lisa Mascaró

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee have blocked a move to subpoena the American translator from the Helsinki summit to testify about the private talks between President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The panel's top Democrat, Rep. Adam Schiff, said Thursday he wanted the translator, who works for the State Department, to appear in closed session, saying Congress must "find out what was said" during the two-hour meeting.

"It is incumbent on us, given what the president said publicly that was of such great concern to our country, to our NATO allies, that we find out what was said privately," Schiff said.

The California lawmaker said he realizes it's an "extraordinary" step to subpoena the interpreter, but

added it's also extraordinary for the president to meet alone with a U.S. adversary.

Senate Democrats have been pushing for testimony from the interpreter to determine if Trump made any deals with Putin during the session.

Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York questioned Thursday if any top administration officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo or Defense Secretary James Mattis, were given any of the details about the meeting or informed of any military or security agreements that were made between Trump and Putin.

"It is utterly amazing, utterly amazing, that no one knows what was said," Schumer said. "This is a democracy. If your president makes agreements with one of our leading — if not our leading — adversary, his Cabinet has to know about it and so do the American people."

Schumer asked Senate Republicans on Thursday to bring the translator and top administration officials, including Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman, to appear before the Senate.

Republicans have set an open hearing next week for Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to testify at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The chairman of that panel, Sen Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), said he is opposed to pursuing the translator's notes from Trump's meeting with Putin.

"It just does not seem to be to me the appropriate place for us to go," Corker said.

Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, first raised the issue of calling the translator to testify earlier this week.

"Congress must exert its authority to be a check on the presidency," she said.

Shaheen called on the panel to hold a hearing with to determine "what was specifically discussed and agreed to on the United States' behalf."

She noted that the "is an official of the U.S. government."

In the House, the committee Chairman Devin Nunes of California led Republicans in a party line vote to table the motion. Nunes said a panel hearing on China was not an appropriate venue. The vote was 11-6.

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House Intel Committee Votes Down Dems' Motion To Subpoena Trump's Translator

By Gabriella Muñoz

[Washington Times](#), July 19, 2018

Republicans voted down a motion introduced by two Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee to subpoena President Trump's translator.

Committee members Rep. Adam Schiff and Rep. Eric Swalwell, both of California, announced the congressional vote on Twitter.

Mr. Schiff said the move was "an extraordinary remedy," but the president's rhetoric at the summit and in subsequent days necessitated it.

BREAKING: @RepSwalwell and I just made a motion in House Intel Committee to subpoena the American interpreter during the summit — the only witness to Trump's meeting with Putin. This is an extraordinary remedy, but Trump's actions necessitate it.

Republicans voted it down. — Adam Schiff (@RepAdamSchiff) July 19, 2018

Mr. Swalwell noted that every Republican voted against the measure.

House Intel Dems just moved to subpoena the translator from the #TrumpPutin private meeting. We must know, did @realDonaldTrump — who has sided with Putin time and again — make any secret deals or risk national security secrets? EVERY Republican voted against the motion. — Rep. Eric Swalwell (@RepSwalwell) July 19, 2018

During an interview on CNN's "New Day" earlier Thursday morning, Mr. Schiff suggested that the president was influenced by Mr. Putin during their private meeting. He posed the idea that the president's comments about Montenegro may have stemmed from his conversation with the Russian leader.

"I think this are the sort of extraordinary circumstances where we ought to subpoena the [president's] interpreter," he said, "We ought to bring the interpreter in behind closed doors and find out did the president make concessions to Putin?"

Rep. Adam Schiff, the ranking Democrat on the House Intel Committee, calls to subpoena President Trump's interpreter from the Helsinki summit: "Under these circumstances, I think it's negligent for us not to find out" <https://t.co/clbFMbI3iHpic.twitter.com/XxEGLvTZUR> — New Day (@NewDay) July 19, 2018

Mr. Trump's translator was the only other person from the U.S. delegation present in the room during the president's one-on-one meeting with Mr. Putin, of which no specific details have emerged yet.

The threat of subpoenaing the translator brings up legal questions of executive privilege extending to the president's interpreter.

Republicans in both chambers of Congress are cold to the idea of subpoenaing Mr. Trump's translator.

Sen. Lindsay Graham refused to consider supporting calls to subpoena the translator. The South Carolina Republican told a Politico reporter in the halls of the Capitol that it could set a troubling precedent.

"Absolutely not," he said, "I can't imagine how that would affect future presidents' in terms of their ability to talk to foreign leaders."

"Absolutely not," Lindsey Graham said when asked if he'd support having Marina Gross, the American translator in Trump's meeting with Putin, testify before Congress.

He said that precedent could prevent foreign leaders from wanting to meet with future U.S. presidents privately pic.twitter.com/DqQD7I6HM5 — POLITICO (@politico) July 19, 2018

Who Heard What Trump Said To Putin? Only One Other American

By Emily Cochrane

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

Marina Gross, the only other American in the room during President Trump's meeting on Monday with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, was the interpreter for Laura Bush at the Russian resort of Sochi in 2008 and interpreted for former Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson in Moscow in 2017. She appears to live in an apartment in Arlington, Va., is an employee of the State Department and is, unsurprisingly, fluent in Russian.

Little else is known publicly about Ms. Gross, who has been thrust into the spotlight as potential corroboration for what transpired between the two leaders during their two-hour meeting in Helsinki, Finland. As furor over the meeting grows, she faces increasing calls from Congress to testify about what she heard. Her fellow interpreters, who pride themselves on their discretion and invisibility, are outraged about those demands.

Ms. Gross's white pad of notes, visible in photographs from the summit meeting, are probably useless, experienced government interpreters said, dictated in her personal shorthand that would be illegible to anyone else. And if she were to say what, exactly, transpired, she would violate an ethics code of confidentiality similar to lawyer-client privilege or the silence of a priest during confession.

Only Mr. Trump, who has alternately contradicted his own narrative of what was said and complained about a lack of fair coverage from a meeting only four people witnessed, could permit Ms. Gross to tell anyone about what she heard. The White House has not said whether Mr. Trump has asked her to do that.

"This is an absolutely nightmarish situation for anyone to be in," said Stephanie van Reigersberg, who assigned interpreters to such meetings as the chief of the interpreting division in the State Department's Office of Language Services for 18 years. "It's a very difficult situation to be in, both in the point of her being asked to give information about what was a confidential meeting and because when you're doing that kind of interpreting, there are memory issues."

But some lawmakers have already called for Ms. Gross's notes, wary of what assurances were exchanged between a Russian leader known for blatant denials and an American president known for frequent falsehoods.

"Given this history, the American people deserve to know if Trump used his position or this meeting with Putin to continue to pursue his own financial interests," Representative Bill Pascrell Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, wrote in a letter this week asking the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to hear public testimony from Ms. Gross.

So far that seems unlikely. Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee voted to deny a formal attempt from Democrats on Thursday to subpoena Ms. Gross, and State Department officials declined to comment on a hypothetical situation.

But interpreters said that even the discussion over whether Ms. Gross should testify threatened to jeopardize their work.

They point to the code of ethics that binds their profession: Interpreters are "bound by the strictest secrecy" toward anyone and any information disclosed in an environment not open to the public.

"I hope this will remain just a desire expressed by some congressmen," said Yuliya Tsaplina, 45, a freelance Russian interpreter based in Paris, who said the demands from American lawmakers had ignited heated debate and concern among several of her international colleagues. "We are only as valuable as we can interpret faithfully, accurately, and keep things in confidence. It will essentially destroy all trust in our profession."

A government official with knowledge of current interpreting practices, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that even in an interpreter's personal lexicon — symbols, doodles and words used to recall a thought or idea — the meaning can evolve from day to day. This makes it difficult for interpreters to recall chunks of thought. In addition, many interpreters often destroy their notes if a security official has not already requested them after highly classified conversations.

"They go into the garbage bin pretty immediately," Ms. Tsaplina said of her notes. "Because they're useless."

The official said that the calls by Capitol Hill for Ms. Gross's testimony were shortsighted on behalf of the lawmakers, who frequently use interpreters for their own private meetings. The State Department currently has 12 staff interpreters in Arabic, French, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Russian and 16 staff translators — who translate the written word — in Arabic, Russian, and Ukrainian, a State Department official said. The department also has three language specialist positions in Bulgarian and Polish, and often supplements staff with contracted interpreters.

Ms. van Reigersberg said that in her experience interpreting in Spanish, she was joined in one-on-one meetings or phone calls by an official note taker or a top security official. If she received permission by the official she was interpreting for, she said, she would often provide a summary to another official that could be corroborated by the note taker. The challenge came, she said, from recalling the big picture of the conversation after relying on short-term memory to interpret.

"Do you really believe a person who has worked that hard, that intensely in that sort of way for so long, can really remember every detail of what she has done?" she said. "You're listening, you're writing, you're figuring out how to render it in the other language, you're repeating it."

Stenography, Ms. van Reigersberg added, is "not what our job is."

The challenge of record-keeping when an American president enters a highly sensitive meeting with a foreign leader, particularly an adversarial one, has long vexed administration officials. Even when President Ronald Reagan and President Mikhail S. Gorbachev of the Soviet Union brought a small rotation of interpreters for a 1986 summit meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, the lack of a verbatim transcript prompted accusations of "distortion." When the pair had met previously with only interpreters, Mr. Reagan had personally briefed members of his delegation twice a day from memory.

Michael A. McFaul, a former American ambassador to Russia, said in an interview on Thursday that note takers were crucial. He described a photo he had of himself, notepad and pen in hand, off to the side as President Barack Obama met with Mr. Putin in 2015.

"I was the official note taker for the meeting," said Mr. McFaul, who has become entangled in conflicting interpretations of whether the White House would allow Moscow to question him. "That's what's missing from the Trump-Putin meeting."

Alexander Vershbow, a former ambassador to Russia under President George W. Bush and a National Security Council aide under President Bill Clinton, said it would most likely be a violation of executive privilege to force Ms. Gross to appear before Congress.

"I think it's more a reflection of the mistrust of President Trump and his judgment in dealing with Russia, that the interpreter is being used as a whipping boy," said Mr. Vershbow, who is now a fellow at the Atlantic Council. "I think it's an unfortunate attempt to politicize the role of the interpreter."

Trump's Interpreter: Should She Be Compelled To Tell What She Heard During Private Meeting With Putin?

By Michael Collins

[USA Today](#), July 19, 2018

U.S. lawmakers eager to learn what went on in the private meeting between President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin are demanding answers from the only other American in the room: Trump's interpreter.

But forcing an interpreter to publicly disclose the details of a confidential conversation between world leaders would be unprecedented and perilous, experts say.

"It has never happened in American history," said Harry Obst, who served as an interpreter for seven presidents. "And if it hasn't happened in over 200 years, there must be a good reason for it."

A growing number of Democrats are asking that interpreter Marina Gross be hauled before a congressional committee to reveal what she heard during the one-on-one meeting between the two world leaders. They also are demanding that Gross turn over any notes that she took during Monday's secret, two-hour meeting in Helsinki.

"It may be unprecedented to subpoena a translator to reveal details of a private meeting between the president and another world leader, but Trump's actions are unprecedented in a way that harms our national security," Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr., D-N.J., wrote Tuesday in a letter to the top lawmakers on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

The American public deserves to know if Trump made any concessions, revealed national security secrets or tried to profit off the presidency, Pascrell said.

"The only way to answer this question," he said, "is by compelling the American translator to testify publicly."

Much like a doctor or a priest, interpreters and translators are bound by a code of ethics dictating that any privileged or confidential information entrusted to

them in the course of the work remain confidential, said Stephanie van Reigersberg, who worked as a State Department interpreter for 32 years before retiring in 2005.

"What happens in a meeting is not up to you to divulge," she said.

Gross is an experienced, respected interpreter who works for the State Department's Office of Language Services, which provides interpreters for the White House. She first came to the department as a contractor but was eventually placed on staff and has served as an interpreter for a number of public officials.

White House file photos show a smiling Gross standing alongside Laura Bush during the then-first lady's visit with members of the Russian Paralympic Team in Sochi, Russia, in 2008. Another photo from last year shows her seated by then-secretary of State Rex Tillerson during the opening remarks by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov ahead of a bilateral meeting in Moscow.

In Helsinki, Gross was at Trump's side during his private meeting with Putin, who also had his own interpreter in the room.

Trump's remarks at a post-summit press conference with Putin touched off a political firestorm among Democrats and Republicans who were dismayed by his friendly demeanor toward the Russian leader and his failure to confront Putin about Moscow's meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

Democrats also are demanding that the administration provide more information about any promises that Trump may have made to Putin during their private meeting. With the administration providing few details, many lawmakers are looking to Gross to fill in the blanks and outline what she heard.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., called for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to convene a hearing with Gross "to determine what was specifically discussed and agreed to on the United States' behalf."

Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, made a motion during a meeting Thursday for the panel to subpoena Gross – "an extraordinary remedy," he conceded, but one he said is necessitated by the president's actions. Republicans on the committee blocked his motion.

Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., told reporters that he doesn't support Democrats' efforts to subpoena Gross but that he does back their push to see her notes. Sen. Bob Corker, the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he is trying to determine whether that would be appropriate and whether it could potentially have other consequences.

"In the future, would any notes even be allowed to be taken if we started doing this kind of thing?" he asked.

Not only would compelling an interpreter to disclose confidential information be damaging, it could jeopardize the interpreter's ability to do her job, said Judy Jenner, a spokeswoman for the American Translators Association.

"People need to be able to trust that what we hear as an interpreter is confidential," Jenner said. "Otherwise, we lose the credibility to do our job."

Many Americans don't fully grasp the extent of an interpreter's role, said Obst, who for 14 years served as the director of the Office of Language Services.

For starters, there's a difference between an interpreter and a translator. An interpreter deals with the spoken language, while a translator handles written text.

At times, an interpreter is the only other member of the U.S. delegation in the room with a president during high-level meetings and ends up acting as a de facto adviser. Before such meetings, the White House, the State Department or other agencies provide the interpreter with a package of briefing papers on the topics to be discussed.

The briefing documents can run up to 200 pages, Obst said, "but the interpreter reads everything up to the last page and even makes notes." In some cases, he said, the interpreter may know the subject matter better than the president and is often called on to answer detailed questions.

"I think the interpreters should be left alone," Obst said of the lawmakers' efforts to target Gross. "They have a hard enough and difficult enough work to do, and they have to carry all of the secrets with them to the end of their life practically. To try and pry something out of an interpreter, it's just not done."

More: Putin warns of 'forces' in the USA trying to undermine successful talks with Trump

Congress members who are pushing to see Gross's notes are likely to be disappointed if they expect them to be revealing, said van Reigersberg, who was in charge of the interpreting branch of the Office of Language Services for 18 years.

An interpreter's notes are not a verbatim record of what was said during a meeting. Their purpose is simply to serve as a memory aid for the interpreter, and they often consist of a bunch of squiggly lines, arrows and symbols that would be indecipherable to anyone else, van Reigersberg said.

One time, when van Reigersberg was serving as an interpreter for Ronald Reagan, the president asked to see her notes. Reagan took one look at her scribbling, laughed out loud and then held the notes up for everybody else in the room to see.

"He thought they were hilarious because they made absolutely no sense to anyone else but me," she said.

It's regrettable that Gross has been caught in the political fallout from the Helsinki summit, van Reigersberg said.

"I feel very sorry for Marina being put through this," she said. "She obviously did the best with what was a very difficult situation."

Democrats Chant 'USA!' On House Floor During Push To Bolster Election Security

By Eliza Collins And Jessica Estepa

[USA Today](#), July 19, 2018

Democratic lawmakers erupted on the House floor Thursday as they pushed to send more money to states for election security.

"USA! USA!" the group chanted, following fiery speeches from Reps. Mike Quigley, D-Ill., and Steny Hoyer, D-Md.

The chanting was so loud that reporters standing outside of the chamber rushed to windows to see what was happening.

Quigley had introduced an appropriations bill amendment that would have provided \$380 million in state grants for election security improvements. Republicans ultimately blocked the amendment.

Quigley pointed to Russian interference in U.S. elections, making note of last week's indictment that charged 12 Russian nationals with meddling in 2016.

He also criticized President Donald Trump for his acceptance this week of Russian President Vladimir Putin's denial that Russia had interfered in the 2016 election. Trump has since tried to quell the furor over those comments by saying he believed the conclusions from the U.S. intelligence community that Russia had meddled.

"We now have the chance to do the right thing," Quigley said before the amendment's failure. "Equipped with the new revelations from the (special counsel Robert) Mueller investigation, and the realization that President Trump will do absolutely nothing to defend our election systems from foreign interference, with Russia attempting to cast out uncertainty and suspicion over the integrity of our election process, now is the time to double down on the efforts to prevent election hacking."

He continued: "The American people are watching, and we must ensure that we, unlike our president, are on the right side of history during this pivotal moment in our democracy."

While his speech drew applause, it was the impassioned plea from Hoyer, the House minority whip, that led to the chanting on the floor.

"This amendment responds by providing for us to partner with our states, to slam the door in the face of the Russian bear or any other adversary that seeks to steal the integrity of our elections," he said. "... Surely, we can rise above pandering to party and Putin to act on behalf of our freedom and our security."

McConnell Calls For Senate Hearings On Russia Sanctions

By Jordain Carney

[The Hill](#), July 19, 2018

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) on Thursday said he has asked two key Senate panels to hold hearings on Russia sanctions and make suggestions for legislation.

McConnell met with Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) and Banking Committee Chairman Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) on Wednesday night to discuss steps to advance legislation following President Trump's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki earlier this week.

"I tasked the chairmen of the Banking and Foreign Relations committees with holding hearings on the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, and to recommend to the Senate additional measures that could respond to or deter Russian malign behavior," McConnell said in a statement Thursday.

Congress overwhelmingly passed Russia sanctions last year as part of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, despite pushback from the White House.

Senate leadership is under growing pressure to pass additional sanctions legislation following the Trump-Putin summit amid heightened concerns that Russia is trying to meddle in the November elections.

McConnell added on Thursday that he requested the hearings and recommendations on potential legislative steps as part of Congress's effort "to form part of any national response" to Russian interference in the United States or other countries.

GOP senators have been locked in a days-long debate over what they should do to try to crack down on Russia. One bill, which is gathering momentum among senators on both sides of the aisle, would slap new sanctions on Russia if the director of national intelligence finds that they interfere in future U.S. elections.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) told reporters on Wednesday that lawmakers were discussing whether to send his legislation directly to the Senate floor since

going through the committee process could slow down any legislative response.

Another bill, from Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), would ask the State Department to determine if Russia is a state sponsor of terrorism, a designation that triggers U.S. sanctions.

The effort to move forward on Russia legislation comes as congressional Republicans have been reluctant to confront Trump on a range of issues, including immigration and trade. A showdown could spark backlash from the party's fervent base, where the president remains popular, just months before the midterms.

Republicans on Capitol Hill have released a flurry of statements in recent days saying that they disagreed with Trump's hesitancy to say Russia meddled in the 2016 election.

"The Intelligence Community Assessment of Russian Activities in the 2016 elections makes clear that President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign aimed at undermining public faith in our democratic process," McConnell said on Thursday.

Poll: Huge GOP Majority Backs Trump's Putin Performance

By Mike Allen

[Axios](#), July 19, 2018

Poll: Huge GOP majority backs Trump's Putin performance

We told you yesterday why elected Republicans go so silent so quickly when they disagree so strongly with President Trump: They fear it's political suicide to speak up. Now we have an exclusive, new Axios/SurveyMonkey poll that shows why those fears are real:

Be smart: This poll foreshadows the coming national drama. Every piece of data, and virtually every public action of elected Republican officials, shows Trump will have overwhelming and probably unbreakable party support, regardless of what Robert Mueller finds with his Russia probe.

More from the poll:

Americans are split on whether the allegations of Russian interference are a serious issue (50%) or a distraction (47%). This breaks cleanly along party lines, with 85 percent of Republicans seeing it as a distraction and 85 percent of Democrats seeing it as a serious issue. Among Independents, 56 percent see it as a serious issue.

More than half of Americans (55%) don't trust the Trump administration to take steps to prevent foreign interference in November's midterms.

Republicans Should Be Repulsed

By Joe Scarborough

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

The morning after my first congressional reelection campaign, I was driving around Pensacola, Fla., collecting signs from supporters' yards. It was an opportunity to spend time with my dad, who I had always suspected favored my brother over me. But I was confident that the previous night's victory would make him proud. As we began driving through my neighborhood, the car radio was reporting election results: "And freshman Republican congressman Joe Scarborough breezed to reelection with an impressive 73 percent of the vote." Turning toward my father in anticipation of some welcome adulation and praise, I found him instead glaring at the radio.

"Who the hell were the other 27 percent?" he bellowed.

Twenty years later, I am asking my father's question of the party I once represented in Congress. For if it is true that only 40 percent of Republicans believe the United States should remain in NATO, as recent polling indicates, then who exactly are the other 60 percent?

Were they sleepwalking through history while our North Atlantic allies stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States during that long, twilight struggle against Communist Russia? Have they forgotten that during that Cold War, nothing less than the planet's survival hung in the balance? Or that it was the North Atlantic alliance that pushed back tirelessly against Kremlin thugs who were trying to undermine the Western democracies? Or that American presidents from Harry S. Truman to George H.W. Bush shared NATO's mission to free 100 million Eastern Europeans from the cruel grip of a regime that enslaved an entire continent and killed tens of millions of its own people?

Are today's Republicans now so tribal as to blindly endorse a foreign policy warped by President Trump's obvious allegiance to a former KGB chief who controls Russia through repression, bribery and political assassination and who has called the collapse of that evil empire the "greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th century"?

Exactly who are these people, and what have they done with my party? And how could any American support Trump's tragically weak performance at Helsinki?

What loyal American would embrace a "Putin First" foreign policy that aligns U.S. interests with a Russian dictator's goals rather than those long championed by America's military and intelligence communities?

How can any red-blooded Republican not be repulsed by their commander in chief's blubbery belief that a former Soviet spy's cynical lies were as compelling as the clear and convincing evidence presented by the U.S. military community, the CIA and his own director of national intelligence?

It strains credulity to believe that any Republican would be so foolish as to defend the diplomatic debacle that led one European newspaper to call the U.S. president "Putin's Poodle." Even at home, Rupert Murdoch's New York Post blasted Trump's "see-no-evil" approach, and the Wall Street Journal editorialized that Congress needed to develop a containment strategy for both Vladimir Putin and Trump.

If anything can still be shocking three years into Trump's chaotic political career, it may be that 71 percent of Republicans still support his handling of Russian relations, even after a summit that many considered treasonous.

If he were still alive, my rock-ribbed Republican father would be asking who these 71 percent were, and why they were selling out America's national security in the name of a hapless reality TV host. But there is no good answer to that question. Further speculation over Trump's disloyalty to the United States or Republicans' fealty to their dumpy dupe of a demagogue is best left to political historians and the ongoing investigation of special counsel Robert S. Mueller III.

But regardless of the verdicts ultimately handed down by historians and the special counsel's office, the Helsinki summit brought two distressing realities into even sharper focus: The president of the United States is under the thumb of Putin. And the Republican Party he leads no longer deserves to survive.

Mike Pompeo: 'Absurd' To Say Trump Was Weak At Putin Summit

By Naomi Lim

[Washington Examiner](#), July 19, 2018

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday rejected the idea that President Trump showed weakness at his summit meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, despite complaints from Democrats and some Republicans that he failed to send a tough message to Putin about election meddling.

"I think those allegations are absurd," Pompeo said during an interview with "Fox News @ Night" when asked about bipartisan complaints about the meeting.

"This administration has been relentless in its efforts to deter Russia from its bad behavior," he continued. "We inherited a situation where Russia was

running all over the United States. These last few days have been, frankly, more heat than light.”

Trump has faced backlash over remarks he made on Monday at the conclusion of his talks with Putin, in which he said Putin’s denials over Kremlin-linked election interference in 2016 were “extremely strong and powerful.” His comments were widely criticized for seeming to undermine U.S. intelligence community assessments, which have found Russia meddled in the 2016 campaign through a series of hacks and disinformation operations.

On Tuesday, Trump clarified that he does accept the consensus of the U.S. intelligence community that Russia meddled in the 2016 election.

Pompeo on Thursday also expressed optimism regarding his negotiations with North Korea about denuclearization following Trump’s summit with Kim Jong Un in June in Singapore.

Time Unveils Its Latest Cover: Faces Of Trump And Putin Morphed Into One

By Kristine Phillips

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin have become one.

So shows Time magazine’s cover for its July 30 print edition. The magazine unveiled the cover online Thursday via a 19-second animated GIF that starts with Trump’s face slowly morphing into Putin’s, then back to Trump’s, then ending with the face of a creepy Trump-Putin love child.

TIME’s new cover: Trump wanted a summit with Putin. He got way more than he bargained for <https://t.co/sUu9gGKmmP> pic.twitter.com/qq6iOjlis1— TIME (@TIME) July 19, 2018

The cover comes amid walkbacks, clarifications and contradictions by Trump following his joint news conference with Putin on Monday in Helsinki. Standing next to Putin inside Finland’s Presidential Palace, Trump failed to support the collective finding of his own intelligence agencies that Russia had interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

“My people came to me, Dan Coats came to me and some others, they said they think it’s Russia. I have President Putin; he just said it’s not Russia,” Trump told reporters. “I will say this: I don’t see any reason why it would be.”

Facing criticism, including from members of his own party, the president on Tuesday said he misspoke during the news conference. He meant to say, “I don’t see any reason it wouldn’t be Russia.” A double negative, the president added.

But on Wednesday, Trump appeared to suggest that Russia is no longer targeting U.S. elections, again contradicting the findings of U.S. intelligence agencies. Hours later, the White House asserted that Trump’s response to a question had been misconstrued.

In the story accompanying the Time cover, senior White House correspondent Brian Bennett raised this question: “Who did Trump trust more?” The Helsinki news conference, Bennett wrote, was a moment for Trump to forcefully rebuke a long-standing U.S. adversary. Instead, the president seemed to equate the credibility of his intelligence agencies with that of Putin, who, according to Trump, was “extremely strong and powerful” in denying Russia’s role.

“A year and a half into his presidency, Trump’s puzzling affinity for Putin has yet to be explained,” Bennett wrote. “Trump is bruised by the idea that Russian election meddling taints his victory, those close to him say, and can’t concede the fact that Russia did try to interfere in the election, regardless of whether it impacted the outcome.”

Time’s July 30 issue would be the sixth time this year that the magazine featured Trump — or a likeness of him — on its covers.

The president has had a love-hate relationship with the magazine, which he had both praised (“very important”) and castigated (will “soon be dead,” like Newsweek).

Still, Trump had relished being on the cover, “maybe more than almost any supermodel,” he once said. A fake Time cover featuring him had been on display at several Trump properties. He had also shown a preoccupation with the magazine’s annual Person of the Year, tweeting in November that he will “PROBABLY” be the one but that he opted out. Time promptly corrected him, saying the magazine does not comment on its choice ahead of publication.

The magazine stirred some controversy last month when it unveiled a cover featuring the president looking down at Yanela, a 2-year-old Honduran girl whose image had become a symbol of families separated by the Trump administration’s “zero-tolerance” policy at the border. “Welcome to America,” says the cover’s text.

But Yanela was not, in fact, separated from her mother, who arrived at the border in Texas with her. The revelation prompted criticisms from the White House and conservatives, who accused Time of exploiting the girl’s photo. Time ultimately decided to stand by its cover, saying Yanela’s photo, captured by award-winning Getty Images photographer John Moore, is the “most visible symbol” of the immigration debate.

Eerie Trump-Putin Mashup Portrait Featured As Time Magazine's Cover Photo

By Ashley May

[USA Today](#), July 19, 2018

A photo illustration blending portraits of President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin is Time magazine's latest cover image.

The mashup for the July issue appears like a Snapchat face swap: Retaining the leaders' light-colored eyes, Trump's signature blonde hair and eyebrows, and Putin's nose. It's a striking cover that comments on the controversy around Trump and Putin's recent summit in Helsinki, Finland.

"A year and a half into his presidency, Trump's puzzling affinity for Putin has yet to be explained," Brian Bennett writes in the Time cover story.

The image, created by artist Nancy Burson, is meant to illustrate a "particular moment in U.S. foreign policy," Time said in a statement.

That moment is ripe with confusion about Trump's relationship with Russia. During his meeting with Putin, Trump failed to confront the Russian leader about Moscow's meddling in the 2016 presidential election. Trump has also made conflicting statements recently about whether he believes there are ongoing Russian threats to American elections — even walking back a statement he made during his appearance with Putin in Helsinki. When Trump said he couldn't see any reason why Russia "would" have been involved in the U.S. presidential election what he meant to say was "wouldn't."

More: Why is Trump open to letting Russia interrogate Americans, including former U.S. ambassador McFaul?

More: President Trump continues to blame media for avalanche of criticism over his Vladimir Putin summit

Trump and his aides appear to still be handling damage control in the face of criticism from both Republican and Democratic lawmakers dismayed by the president's friendly demeanor toward Putin.

The magazine also shared a video showing Trump morphing into Putin.

Trump Wanted A Summit With Putin. He Got Way More Than He Bargained For

By Brian Bennett

[TIME](#), July 19, 2018

'Who do you believe?'

It was a simple question, asked of President Trump by a seasoned reporter, but it sent a jolt through the assembled media at the July 16 press conference held at an ornate palace in Helsinki. Vladimir Putin had just

denied again that Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. America's Justice Department, intelligence community and both chambers of Congress have concluded, definitively, that the Kremlin had done it. Who did Trump trust more?

This was the moment for the President to deliver a forceful rebuke to America's long-standing adversary. Instead, Trump replied: "I have confidence in both parties," he said. "I have great confidence in my intelligence people, but I will tell you that President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today."

The founders of the United States gave future Presidents just one grave set of instructions, enshrined in Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution. Before assuming the office, the President-elect must swear to "preserve, protect and defend" the Constitution and "faithfully" execute the duties of the office. Russia's 2016 attack had been designed, first and foremost, to undermine faith in American democracy at home and abroad. There could hardly be a more direct call for the President to be true to that oath. On the dais in Helsinki, Trump wasn't up to the task.

The government he leads had tried to prepare him. Days before the summit, Trump had been briefed in person by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein on the details of an indictment against 12 officers of Russia's military intelligence services who had executed key elements of the 2016 attack. The charges, compiled by special counsel Robert Mueller and released to the public on July 13, were meticulous in their evidence, damning in their conclusions and based at least in part on deep penetration of Russia's intelligence services by their American counterparts. Even the Russians seemed stunned, not so much by the revelations themselves as by Trump's unwillingness to stand by them. "Whenever a head of state does not trust his own intelligence agencies," retired KGB general Vladimir Rubanov tells TIME, "that's a big problem for the country where that happens."

It was only the latest offense. The U.S. recently expelled 60 Russian spies in retaliation for Moscow's alleged nerve-agent attack against a former Russian spy and his daughter in England. U.S. Homeland Security officials and members of Congress are scrambling to defend the 2018 midterm elections against what they report are continued Russian efforts to undermine American democracy and its citizens' faith in the ballot box. And around the world, the U.S. and Russia are in a tense standoff, from the airspace near Alaska, where Russian bombers regularly test American readiness to counter an attack, to the borders of Ukraine, to the battlefields of Syria, where Russian mercenaries attacked a U.S. special-forces base last February.

In addition to calling Putin's denials "powerful," Trump praised the Russian as a "good competitor" and called America itself "foolish" for allowing the relationship between the two countries to deteriorate. He welcomed the prospect of working with Russia in Syria and hailed Putin's offer to cooperate with the Mueller probe in exchange for helping to investigate the British investor Bill Browder as "an incredible offer."

The reaction was immediate, and as profound as what had just occurred. Trump's infidelity to the expectations of his office as Commander in Chief left foreign-policy veterans stunned. "That press conference was the single most embarrassing performance by an American President on the world stage that I've ever seen," said William Burns, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who served as an aide to Republicans such as James Baker and Condoleezza Rice before becoming Deputy Secretary of State under Barack Obama. Even Republicans began to publicly entertain the possibility that Trump had been compromised. "That's how a press conference sounds when an Asset stands next to his Handler," tweeted former Republican National Committee chairman Michael Steele.

The prostration of a U.S. President felt all the more significant because of what had come immediately before: another repudiation of a world order led by America. The venue this time was a meeting of NATO, the military alliance that has guaranteed global security since World War II. Trump dismissed it during his campaign as "obsolete" and has vacillated about U.S. commitments while in office. Key U.S. partners are now reconsidering their need to defend themselves. "We can no longer completely rely on the White House," Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said after Trump's tour of the Continent. "Historians," wrote Belgium's former Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, "will view this visit as the moment the post-1945 world order was upended."

Some Trump allies tried to minimize the damage by saying Trump's behavior reflected only the President's insecurity, rather than an intentional breach of faith with the country he leads and its longtime partners. In this view, Trump was driven by a reflexive defense of his own political legitimacy and his victory in 2016, not a deeper alliance with Putin. But imbedded in that explanation was another description of the core problem: Trump justified his break with traditional allies—countries that sent troops to die in Afghanistan and Iraq—as a manifestation of his "America first" approach to foreign policy. His performance in Helsinki and the days after was more akin to "Me first." The President shrugged off subjugation of the most basic needs of U.S.

democracy-free and fair elections—by a hostile power. When he stood next to a smirking Putin and sided with America's most dangerous enemy against the hundreds of thousands of men and women in the U.S. national-security apparatus, he exposed just how deep and perilous this can be. Any other President might have found reason to avoid Putin altogether. Aside from the global problems he has aggravated, from Syria to Ukraine, the Russian has been nothing but trouble for Trump personally, casting a shadow over his election with meddling that in turn prompted the formidable special-counsel investigation that clearly preoccupies the President. White House aides were worried that the meeting was an unnecessary risk and that insufficient preparations had been made to define the agenda and goals. On top of that, there was no clear plan for how Trump should respond to the mounting public evidence about the Russian operation against the 2016 election. Mueller's 29-page indictment outlines a sophisticated conspiracy by Russian military officers, targeting over 300 individuals affiliated with Hillary Clinton's campaign and the Democratic Party. The Russians hacked into their computers, stole documents and orchestrated the release of those stolen files "to interfere with the 2016 presidential election," according to the indictment.

Mueller's team compiled granular details about the operation, including the addresses of buildings used by Russian intelligence services. The indictment cites a building called the "Tower" on Kirova Street in Moscow, where the Russian military intelligence service, the GRU, facilitated the release of stolen documents and publicized anti-Clinton content on fake social-media accounts. It also names specific accounts the hackers used, the dates and locations from which they launched attacks and even how long certain attacks lasted.

That U.S. intelligence was willing to show how deeply it had penetrated their Russian adversaries' computer systems is a testament to how important America's spies believe it is to hold Russia accountable. On June 20, 2016, for example, Russian spies allegedly spent more than seven hours trying to connect to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee network, U.S. authorities found. On April 15, 2016, the indictment claims, the conspirators searched a hacked DCCC computer for specific search terms, including "hillary," "cruz" and "trump," and copied folders from the computer, including one called "Benghazi Investigations."

Once they had stolen files, the hackers created online personas, including the infamous Guccifer 2.0, to release the information through organizations and individuals. On June 27, 2016, the indictment alleges, Guccifer 2.0 offered to send a U.S. reporter stolen

emails from "Hillary Clinton's staff." Mueller's team found that the Russians had primarily used Bitcoin to pay for their hacking activity. The indictment even lays out ways the Russian hackers tried to cover their tracks, noting that on May 13, 2016, they deleted logs from a Democratic National Committee computer they had infiltrated.

America's confrontation with Russia is not limited to the escalating spy wars. U.S. and Russian forces operate in close proximity at several flash points in the Middle East and Eastern Europe by flying warplanes, sailing battleships and training proxy forces on the ground. The U.S. has invested millions of dollars in rebuilding long-forgotten outposts to restart submarine surveillance because of a surge in Russian submarine operations, and American fighter jets routinely intercept long-range Russian bombers off the western coast of Alaska.

Nowhere is the U.S.-Russia relationship more perilous than in Syria, where the two nations are on opposite sides of that country's bloody civil war. American warplanes have carried out thousands of airstrikes against ISIS militants, while Russian bombers conduct strikes to support the government of President Bashar Assad. Both nations also have hundreds of troops and military contractors on the ground. On Feb. 7, scores of Russian mercenaries were killed after crossing the Euphrates River in a four-hour-long barrage laid down by American warplanes.

All this makes Trump's posture toward Putin even more baffling, especially as he undermines the decades-long transatlantic alliance that has long galled the Russian. The President's decisions to leave the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and back out of the Paris Agreement have eroded European leaders' faith in America's ability to live up to its international obligations. And Trump's reluctance to fully embrace the U.S.'s long-standing commitment to protect members of NATO—the organization's central tenet—has raised more alarms.

During Trump's first visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels last year, he cut from his speech a mention of Article 5—the section of the NATO treaty about mutual defense—only to affirm it later under pressure. He signed the NATO communiqué during his most recent trip, but in an interview with Fox News' Tucker Carlson that aired on July 17, Trump hesitated to say he would want American troops to come to the defense of Montenegro, the Balkan country that joined NATO last year after a Russian-linked coup attempt failed to derail its accession to the alliance. In the view of Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who served as the President of Estonia from 2006 to 2016, the changes Trump has brought to Europe are

permanent. "This idea that we will always have the United States is now gone," Ilves tells TIME.

Perhaps the most pressing challenge for the U.S., however, is the security of its cybersystems. The same day that Mueller's indictments were announced, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said that when it comes to cyberattacks against America, Russia is the "most aggressive foreign actor, no question." Many of those efforts, Coats said, continue to be designed "to undermine our democracy." Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen doesn't see Russia hitting the 2018 elections with the same "scale or scope" that it did in 2016, but she acknowledged on July 14 that U.S. intelligence shows "persistent Russian efforts using social media, sympathetic spokespeople, and other fronts to sow discord and divisiveness amongst the American people."

Yet for some reason Trump still isn't buying it. Asked at a July 18 Cabinet meeting whether Russia was still targeting U.S. elections, Trump appeared to shake his head and say, "No." For the second time in as many days, the White House was obliged to reinterpret his remarks.

But attempts at damage control have done little to soften the criticism. Republican Senator John McCain called Trump's performance "disgraceful" and said "no prior President has ever abased himself more abjectly before a tyrant." The Senate Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer, said the summit raised the question of whether Putin had some kind of damning information on Trump. "There seems to be no rational explanation for President Trump's behaviors," said Schumer, "so millions of Americans are left wondering if Putin indeed has something over the President."

A year and a half into his presidency, Trump's puzzling affinity for Putin has yet to be explained. Trump is bruised by the idea that Russian election meddling taints his victory, those close to him say, and can't concede the fact that Russia did try to interfere in the election, regardless of whether it impacted the outcome. He views this problem entirely through a political lens, these people say, unable or unwilling to differentiate between the question of whether his campaign colluded with Russia—which he denies—and the question of whether Russia attempted to influence the election. "Trump got hung up on his own personal issues" about the election, says Michael Allen, who served on President George W. Bush's National Security Council.

Whatever the President's rationale, his equivocation in Helsinki paralleled on the international stage his controversial statements in defense of white nationalists in August 2017. As with the aftermath of that controversy, some Republicans rebuked the President.

Many are loath to rein him in because they fear Trump's popularity with GOP voters, yet even typically cautious Republicans viewed the Helsinki conference as crossing a line. Senate GOP leadership gave its members the green light to criticize the President. A bipartisan bill that would impose severe sanctions if Russia is caught meddling in 2018 or other future elections had stalled in the Senate. Helsinki has breathed fresh life into the effort. Republican Senate aides said it could pass the chamber with even a veto-proof majority.

Away from the political scrum, other U.S. officials are stepping up their defense against Russian influence operations. The Department of Justice's national-security division has taken over the prosecution of the 12 Russian GRU hackers. Bookending the spectacle of the summit in Helsinki, the DOJ on July 16 released a new set of charges against Maria Butina, a Russian national who allegedly infiltrated the NRA, the National Prayer Breakfast and other GOP-friendly organizations during and after the 2016 campaign in an attempt to influence them. (Butina pleaded not guilty on July 18.)

The continuing efforts by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. intelligence community are a useful reminder to Trump, Putin and the rest of the world. Whatever the fallout from the Helsinki summit, no one man ultimately controls the enforcement of America's laws or the defense of its national security. And nothing Trump says or does will change that.

Putin Says Trump's Critics In U.S. Are Trying To Undermine Meeting

By Andrew E. Kramer

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia warned on Thursday that certain political forces in the United States — a formulation that usually refers to a supposed anti-Russian cabal in the American national security establishment — were trying to undermine what he called a successful meeting this week with President Trump.

"We see that there are forces in the United States that can easily sacrifice Russian-U.S. relations for the sake of their own ambitions," Mr. Putin said in a foreign policy speech to Russian ambassadors. "Let's see how the events develop, especially considering that certain forces are trying to disavow the results of the meeting in Helsinki."

The comments came after Mr. Trump, who was criticized by representatives from both parties for suggesting that he had accepted Russian denials of interference in the 2016 election, contrary to the conclusions of American intelligence agencies, sought to

clarify his comments at a cabinet meeting in Washington. Mr. Trump said that, in fact, he did accept the agencies' conclusions.

Russia, while developing its foreign policy toward the United States, should consider the efforts of a "quite powerful" group in Washington that seeks to undermine good relations between the countries, Mr. Putin said on Thursday.

The comments were some of the most extensive to date by Mr. Putin about the Russian view about whether a "deep state" of national security elites dominates American politics and is conspiring to thwart Mr. Trump.

Mr. Trump, too, seemed to feel that the talks in Finland were fruitful and underappreciated. "The Summit with Russia was a great success, except with the real enemy of the people, the Fake News Media," he said on Twitter. "I look forward to our second meeting so that we can start implementing some of the many things discussed, including stopping terrorism, security for Israel, nuclear."

This was not the first time Mr. Trump has described journalists as the "enemy of the people," a phrase with a long and complicated history in the former Soviet Union.

Nikita Khrushchev, a war-hardened Communist not known for squeamishness, demanded an end to the use of the term in 1956 because it was, he said, "specifically introduced for the purpose of physically annihilating" those who disagreed with Stalin.

Other Russian officials have for months spoken of plots in America against Mr. Trump, echoing the American leader's own criticisms of the special counsel investigation into Russian election interference and possible collusion with members of Mr. Trump's campaign team as the work of the "deep state."

"We see that there are forces in the United States that put their own group and narrow partisan interests above the national ones," Mr. Putin said. "Our renowned satirists once wrote very well about such people: 'Pathetic, paltry people.' But this is not so in this particular case: These people are not pathetic and not paltry. On the contrary, they are quite powerful and strong if they can, excuse my crudeness, force-feed millions of their people various stories that are hard to digest in normal logic."

In speaking of "pathetic, paltry people" in reference to opponents of Mr. Trump's Russia policies, Mr. Putin appeared to be quoting from the book "The Twelve Chairs" by the Russian satirists Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov, using a derisive phrase that is familiar to readers of Russian literature.

Mr. Putin has also responded to criticism stemming from the news conference after the summit meeting, issuing a clarification of his own comments.

He suggested on Monday that Moscow might allow American law enforcement agents to question 12 Russian men identified by the special prosecutor, Robert S. Mueller III, as military intelligence officers who hacked the Democratic National Committee and other targets during the 2016 election, if the United States allowed Russia to question American intelligence agents and others suspected of illegal activity in Russia.

Mr. Trump called it “an incredible offer.”

Back in Washington, the White House press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, said the idea was under consideration, though a State Department spokeswoman, Heather Nauert, called the idea “absolutely absurd.”

As an example of how such an arrangement could be helpful, Mr. Putin had said Russian law enforcement agents wanted to question associates of a onetime investor in Russia, William F. Browder, who he said had violated Russian tax laws and donated \$400 million of his gains to the Democratic Party. Mr. Browder denied violating Russian tax laws.

No such donations were made, campaign finance records show. The figure, in fact, would amount to roughly half of Hillary Clinton's campaign budget in 2016. On Wednesday, the Russian prosecutor general's office issued a clarification, saying Mr. Putin had meant to say \$400,000.

“Our president asked us to correct the sum,” said a spokesman, Aleksandr Kurennoy.

In another Russian effort to clarify the record from Helsinki, the transcript of Mr. Putin's comments posted on the Kremlin website omitted the second portion of a two-part question that had been posed to Mr. Putin.

A reporter had asked: “Did you want President Trump to win the election? Did you direct any of your officials to help him do that?”

Mr. Putin quickly answered, “Yes, I wanted him to win, because he spoke about normalizing Russian-American relations,” a video of the news conference shows.

It was unclear whether Mr. Putin had heard the full translation before answering. The Kremlin transcript seemed to support this interpretation — rather than a surprise admission of election meddling, which Russia has denied — by including only the first portion of the question.

Mr. Putin's answer is also edited. The transcripts cites him saying only, “Because he spoke of normalizing Russian-American relations.”

For Russia, Trump Is Creating More Problems Than He Solves

By Angela Charlton

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

MOSCOW (AP) — Having Donald Trump in the White House is looking increasingly like a liability for the Kremlin, rather than an asset. But don't expect President Vladimir Putin to say that out loud.

Russia's official assessment of Trump's high-stakes summit with Putin is carefully upbeat. In his first public comment on it, Putin on Thursday declared it “successful.”

That stands in sharp contrast to the rain of criticism the U.S. president has faced at home. And as the days pass and Trump's comments about Monday's summit become more and more contradictory, Moscow appears to be quietly losing hope for a thaw in Russian-U.S. ties under Trump.

Putin doesn't blame Trump for that. He blames Trump's opponents.

“Certain forces are trying to disavow the results of the meeting in Helsinki,” and hamper progress on what they discussed, such as limiting their nuclear arsenals or ending the war in Syria, Putin said.

In a meeting at the Foreign Ministry with Russia's ambassadors to other countries, Putin warned them to “take to this into account” in dealing with the U.S.

The U.S.-Russia relationship is “in some ways worse than during the Cold War,” Putin said, “It's naive to think that the problems would be solved in a few hours.”

The Helsinki summit allowed them to start on “the path to positive change,” he said, but added that he was cautious about the longer term.

“We will see how things develop further,” Putin said, evoking those in the U.S. trying to prevent any improvement in relations and “putting narrow party interests above the national interest.”

The lively debate in Washington is unthinkable in Russia, where Putin has never faced real political opposition and leads a country that has never had a democratic transition of power.

While he and Trump seem to be cut from the same cloth, they come from very different worlds.

In public, Russian officials have been consistent in their praise of the summit and criticism of Trump's opponents, while also exercising caution about taking aim at Trump himself.

Behind the scenes, however, some members of the political and business elite have a different assessment.

“Trump's behavior was a total disaster for long-term prospects of the normalization of the U.S.-Russia

relationship," said Alexander Gabuev of the Carnegie Moscow Center.

Trump has come under widespread domestic criticism about the meeting with Putin both from Democratic opponents and some Republicans. He has made contradictory statements over whether he believes Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. election.

"He's made things much worse," Gabuev said.

Trump tweeted Thursday that his critics in the media "are pushing so recklessly hard and hate the fact that I'll probably have a good relationship with Putin."

Indeed, when Trump came to office, many Russians hoped he would pave the way for lifting sanctions and ending years of tensions. But now, Gabuev said, "whether this bet on Trump for the long term is a smart one is hard to see."

In a possible dig at Trump's unpredictable presidency, Putin on Thursday lauded Russia's "consistent, responsible, independent foreign policy."

Putin had both good and bad things to say about Trump in a broad speech about foreign policy.

The Russian leader praised Trump's mediation efforts in North Korea, but slammed his protectionist trade policies and the decision to pull out of the international accord curbing Iran's nuclear activities.

He also lashed out at Europe and U.S.-dominated NATO, saying Russia would hit back with an "equivalent response" to the alliance's bases near Russia's borders and other "aggressive steps." He didn't elaborate.

Russian politicians also criticized proposals by U.S. lawmakers to question Trump's interpreter from the Helsinki summit about what topics the men discussed privately.

At his joint news conference with Putin, Trump said they discussed Syria "at length" but was vague about the outcome. The Russian Defense Ministry has said it is ready to implement what it called agreements on increased cooperation with the U.S. military in Syria. But U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has given no public indication since the summit of plans to work more closely with the Russian military in Syria.

Konstantin Kosachev, head of the upper house of the Russian parliament's foreign affairs committee, said the idea of questioning the translator about what was said privately sets a dangerous precedent that threatens the "the whole idea of diplomacy," according to Russian news agencies.

Kosachev also said if the summit turns out to be a failure, it won't be the fault of Putin or Trump.

"There is no doubt about the Russian side's ability and readiness to fulfill the results of this summit, but there is doubt regarding the American side, and it not is

connected to things President Trump personally wants to achieve or avoid," he said.

"It is connected to his ability to fulfill these agreements, which, to my mind, is artificially restricted by the U.S. Congress and some U.S. agencies, let alone intelligence services," Kosachev added.

If Putin's speech to the envoys raised serious issues, the Foreign Ministry, known by its Russian acronym MID, used the occasion to make a sardonic quip.

Its official Twitter account posted a photo of a long line of the ambassadors heading into the Putin speech at the ministry's ornate headquarters. The caption, accompanied by a winking emoji, said: "When you can't wait to meddle in someone's elections — Russian diplomats going to work at MID."

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God Bless The 'deep State'

By Eugene Robinson

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

Before this harebrained and reckless administration is history, the nation will have cause to celebrate the public servants derided by Trumpists as the supposed "deep state."

The term itself is propaganda, intended to cast a sinister light upon men and women whom Trump and his minions find annoyingly knowledgeable and experienced. They are not participants in any kind of dark conspiracy. Rather, they are feared and loathed by the president and his wrecking crew of know-nothings because they have spent years — often decades — mastering the details of foreign and domestic policy.

God bless them. With a supine Congress unwilling to play the role it is assigned by the Constitution, the deep state stands between us and the abyss.

Witness, with horror and shame, Trump's disgraceful performance on the world stage during the past week. The lowest of several low points was his joint appearance Monday in Helsinki with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who smirked with obvious glee as the president of the United States soiled himself. Metaphorically, I mean.

Trump said that Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats and other officials had told him "they think" Russia meddled with the 2016 election. But Putin issued an "extremely strong and powerful" denial when the two leaders met privately, and Trump concluded that "I don't see any reason why it would be" Russia. Coats fired back within hours, issuing a statement that reiterated the intelligence community's consensus view, which is not

“we think” but “we know.” Trump’s ridiculous claim Tuesday that he meant to say “wouldn’t” instead of “would” amounted to nothing more than a moment of comic relief.

Thanks to a New York Times article published Wednesday night, we now know that the nation’s top intelligence officials briefed Trump in detail about the Russian meddling on January 6, 2017 — two weeks before his inauguration. According to the Times, the officials shared with Trump powerful evidence that the interference, meant to boost Trump’s chances of winning, was ordered by Putin himself.

So we know that when Trump casts doubt on Russia’s culpability, he’s not speaking from a position of ignorance. It’s not that intelligence officials have asked him to take their conclusion on faith. They’ve shown him the goods. He’s just lying.

Who were the anonymous sources for the Times story? I have no idea. But if I had spent a career fighting for my country in the secrets world, and I heard my president give more credence to the former KGB officer who rules an undemocratic Russia than to his own intelligence chief, I would be angry.

And if I had also heard my president welcome what he called an “incredible” offer from Putin — that he would allow special counsel Robert S. Mueller III to observe questioning of the 12 Russian spies he indicted last week if Russian authorities were also allowed to interrogate Americans they speciously accuse of crimes, including a former ambassador to Moscow, Michael McFaul — I would be furious and alarmed. I would have to wonder about the loyalty of my commander in chief. And I would have to think about my duty to the nation.

Russian officials have said publicly that they are ready to begin implementing agreements reached by Trump and Putin during their two-hour private meeting, which only one Russian and one American translator were allowed to attend. But according to The Post, in an article also published Wednesday night, high-ranking U.S. diplomatic and military officials did not know what those agreements were.

Did they reach some sort of understanding about nuclear arms? About Syria? About Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea? If you worry, as I do, that Trump may have intentionally or unintentionally given away the store, you have to root for the deep state to find out what transpired in that room — and find ways to reverse, or at least mitigate, the damage.

Is Trump so obsequious to Putin because his ego will not allow him to acknowledge that the Russian strongman helped him beat Hillary Clinton? Or does Putin have something on him? We will get answers at some point, but we can’t ignore what we appear to be

seeing right now: ongoing collusion, between Trump and Putin, to impede and denigrate the Mueller investigation. It’s happening before our eyes.

Democrats in Congress are powerless; the Republican leadership, spineless. Experienced government officials know that their job is to serve the president. But what if the president does not serve the best interests of the nation?

In this emergency, the loyal and honorable deep state has a higher duty. It’s called patriotism.

The Intelligence Community Has Never Faced A Problem Quite Like This

By David Ignatius

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

ASPEN, Colo.

The American intelligence community has never faced a problem quite like President Trump — a commander in chief who is suspected by a growing number of Republicans and Democrats of deferring to Russia’s views over the recommendations of his own intelligence agencies.

“There are almost two governments now,” worries John McLaughlin, a former acting CIA director. He discusses the Trump conundrum with the same vexation as a dozen other former intelligence officials I’ve spoken with since the president’s shockingly acquiescent performance onstage Monday with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

How are current intelligence chiefs handling this unprecedented situation? They are operating carefully but correctly, trying to balance their obligations to the president with the oaths they have sworn to protect and defend the Constitution. The officials continue to serve the elected president, but they are also signaling that they work for the American people.

Daniel Coats, the director of national intelligence, admirably rebuffed Trump on Monday, a few hours after the president seemed to accept Putin’s denial of meddling in the 2016 election. Coats gave the White House a heads-up, but he didn’t clear his statement. He believed it was essential to defend the intelligence community immediately.

FBI Director Christopher A. Wray made a similar show of independence here Wednesday at the Aspen Security Forum, saying the Russia investigation wasn’t a “witch hunt,” as Trump claims, and affirming, “Russia attempted to intervene with the last election, and . . . it continues to engage in malign influence operations to this day.”

The brazen contempt that Putin has shown for the United States is an extraordinary feature of this ultimate

spy story. In Helsinki, Putin publicly affirmed that he had supported Trump and evaded a question about whether he had compromising information on him; in their private meeting, he asked for Trump's help in questioning a former U.S. ambassador, Michael McFaul, with Trump promising he would study the matter.

Putin, the ex-KGB officer, has described himself as a specialist in dealing with people, according to Daniel Hoffman, a former CIA station chief in Moscow. Putin's tradecraft, Hoffman says, is summarized in a phrase popular among Russian intelligence operatives: "What makes a person breathe?"

Putin seems to have an uncanny sense for how Trump breathes. That has led some observers to speculate that perhaps Trump is a controlled Russian agent. This seems unlikely to me, partly because the Russians would never allow a true mole to take such crazy risks of exposure. "He's not a controlled agent, because if he was, they'd tell him how to behave so as not to endanger himself," observes a former head of CIA operations against Russia.

No, Trump is something different. The phrase "useful idiot," attributed to Vladimir Lenin, is often used, but the technical Russian term for an often unwitting but helpful asset is a "confidential contact." What Trump offers Russia isn't the information he knows but his role as a human wrecking ball against America's traditional allies and trading partners.

What will be different in the spy world in the aftermath of this jaw-dropping week? Probably not much. Intelligence agencies are resilient; they "get on with it," as legendary CIA Director Richard Helms liked to say. The president remains the first customer, and most veterans of the spy world can't imagine withholding information from him. Officials may be more cautious, briefing especially sensitive details first to the national security adviser, say, or cautioning the president that he doesn't want to know how a piece of information was obtained.

What about the agents who are risking their lives in Moscow or Beijing to spy for America? Will they balk now? Again, probably not: Spies have deep reasons for working for America, positive and negative, and they know the risks they're taking. Agents who have helped America because it represented something different from Putin's authoritarianism may have second thoughts, however. That's the hidden intelligence cost of Trump's presidency: We're a less admirable nation.

Will foreign spy services that share sensitive intelligence through what's termed "liaison" reduce the flow? Once again, probably not. Their relationships with the CIA, FBI, NSA and other agencies go back so many decades that cooperation is almost hard-wired. If Trump

continues to speak of the European Union as a "foe," or to undermine British or German politicians he doesn't like, that cooperation could eventually change. But our foreign partners need U.S. intelligence, however much they dislike Trump.

"At the end of the day, our work is what endures," Wray said here. His commitment to the law and the facts offered a moment to appreciate that Trump is checked, not by some imaginary "deep state," but by patriotic men and women doing their jobs.

How The Putin-Trump Press Conference Rates On Our Trump Opposition Scale

By Perry Bacon Jr.

[FiveThirtyEight](#), July 19, 2018

When President Trump backtracked (slightly) from controversial remarks he made on Monday in which he questioned the U.S. intelligence community's conclusions that Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. election, I wasn't surprised. It was another demonstration that what usually forces Trump to back down from a confrontation or concede defeat is not just the intensity of opposition (particularly if it's coming only from congressional Democrats), but the breadth of that opposition: Trump usually feels compelled to respond in some way when powerful blocs in American politics combine to resist him.

In the 24 hours after Trump's comments in Helsinki, Democrats on Capitol Hill were of course furious about them. But so were some Republicans, including those who typically criticize Trump and even a few Trump allies. Dan Coats, the director of national intelligence, issued a statement affirming his confidence in the intelligence community's findings that Russia had interfered in the 2016 election; issuing the statement was an aggressive step, since Coats is a Trump political appointee. And the media was unusually unrestrained in attacking Trump, a tenor perhaps best illustrated by CNN's Anderson Cooper declaring on air that Trump's behavior was "disgraceful," and Fox News' Abby Huntsman writing on Twitter that "No negotiation is worth throwing your own people and country under the bus."

In short, Trump's Russia comments had managed to greatly annoy Democrats, many Republicans, the press, and the leader of one of the most important bureaucracies in the U.S. government (the intelligence community) in one swoop. As a result, the president's Helsinki comments were likely going to stay in the news and continue to be criticized, so he basically withdrew them (despite looking annoyed at having to do so). This is not the first time Trump conceded after facing this kind of broad opposition.

“Broad” is the key word there. Last year, we came up with a “Trump opposition meter,” identifying six powerful blocs who could limit or check Trump:

- The federal bureaucracy.
- The courts.
- Democrats in Congress.
- Republicans in Congress.
- The public.
- The press.

The idea here is simple and pretty intuitive: The more of these groups that line up against Trump on a particular issue, the more trouble he’s in. Admittedly, that’s obvious on some level — of course a president is in more trouble if his own party is opposing one of his initiatives. But Trump’s actions generate so much outrage (much of it quite justified, in my mind) that we wanted a tool to separate 24-hour dust-ups from more serious controversies, and to help us judge when outrage and opposition might force the president to back down.

Last year, for example, all six of these blocs opposed Trump’s initial executive order establishing what’s referred to as the “travel ban” or “Muslim ban,” and that forced the administration to draw up a different version of the policy. Five blocs (the courts were not involved) disapproved of Trump’s decision to dismiss then-FBI Director James Comey, which led to a strong pushback from the bureaucracy in the form of the appointment of special counsel Robert Mueller. Opposition to Trump’s comments in the wake of the white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, similarly crossed partisan lines in Congress and drew rebukes from the press and the public, so it reached Level 4.

In 2018, I would argue that the president’s remarks that people from “shithole countries” were trying to enter the U.S. was a Level 4 controversy (disapproval from the public, the press and representatives from both parties), and that the administration’s now-abandoned policy that was resulting in children being separated from their parents at the border was a Level 6, with federal judges and bureaucrats also signaling that they viewed the policy as wrongheaded., Republicans, the media and the public.

“>1

Trump has most likely never come across our opposition scale — an outrage in and of itself! — but he probably knew he was in trouble after his comments in Helsinki once Republicans in Congress started to make some noise, joining the press, the bureaucracy and Democrats. (A CBS News poll released on Thursday found the president was on the wrong side of public opinion, too: 55 percent of Americans disapproved of Trump’s handling of the summit with Putin, compared to

just 32 percent who approved.) He backed down from the family-separation less than a month ago, and the same opposition pattern was developing then.

It’s worth thinking about opposition to Trump among these groups as we look to three other major events that will (or could) happen in 2018. Can Democrats somehow shift the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court from a typical partisan fight — in which the public and the press are not taking strong anti-Trump positions — to something that mobilizes those blocs against the White House? Can Senate Republicans, the leading opponents of Trump’s tariffs policy, get the public and press more engaged on the issue and draw more Democrats into opposing the policy too? Are all the reports that Trump would consider removing Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein or Mueller really just hype, since Trump knows that such a move is likely to draw at least Level 5 opposition almost immediately?

If you think the answers to the questions above are “probably not,” “no” and “probably yes,” you are getting the idea here. At least for now, there are some checks and balances on President Trump. I’m guessing James Madison intended that the most important check on a sitting president would be the person sitting in Paul Ryan’s chair, not Anderson Cooper’s. But this is American politics in 2018.

American Government Will Keep On Fighting To State The Truth On Russia

By Michael Hayden, Opinion Contributor —

[The Hill](#), July 19, 2018

In the middle of Tuesday’s presidential walkback about Russian election interference, I couldn’t (or maybe I could, I’m not sure) help but think of a scene from the 1997 comedy “Excess Baggage.” In the scene, would-be car thief but inadvertently-turned-kidnapper Benicio del Toro asks his unexpected victim Alicia Silverstone, who had been hiding in the trunk of her dad’s expensive car, “How stupid do you think I am?” To which Silverstone replies, “How stupid is there?” To my mind, that just about sums it up when it comes to the president’s view of the American people.

To review the events this week, for the benefit of anyone who until recently has been hiding in the trunk of their own car, President Trump was attempting by the addition of a contraction to rectify what CNN’s Anderson Cooper rightly described as “one the most disgraceful performances” ever given by an American president at a summit.

I had actually watched the Helsinki summit’s closing press conference carefully, taking notes in

preparation for a TV interview later that day. I had Russian President Vladimir Putin way ahead on points — more confident, better prepared, more detailed in his answers, even had better posture — but was prepared to conclude that this could have been a lot worse and that my fears about the summit may have been exaggerated.

The skies darkened a little when Jeff Mason from Reuters asked Trump if he held Russia accountable for anything in particular. The president spread theoretical guilt for the present state of affairs on both countries but got specific only when he indulged a familiar riff on special counsel Robert Mueller: “The probe is a disaster for our country. I think it’s kept us apart. It’s kept us separated.” A few minutes later the AP’s Jonathan Lemire then teed up this classic for the American president: “President Putin denied having anything to do with the election interference in 2016. Every U.S. intelligence agency has concluded that Russia did. What, who, my first question for you, sir, is, who do you believe?”

In an answer that began by indicting the FBI’s investigation for not seizing the Democratic National Committee’s server, then wandered through Hillary Clinton’s emails, some mysterious Pakistani IT specialist, and FBI official Peter Strzok before ending with the words “total witch hunt,” the president of the United States offered this judgment while standing a few feet away from the president of the Russian Federation: “My people came to me. Dan Coats came to me, and some others. They said they think it’s Russia. I have President Putin. He just said it’s not Russia. I will say this: I don’t see any reason why it would be.”

That last sentence was a shocker, to be sure. I could easily imagine the groans and shouted expletives that would have been audible in the halls at the CIA in Langley, the NSA in Fort Meade, and the FBI in the Hoover Building when it was uttered. Shocking, but certainly not new. It was perfectly consistent with much of what the president has said over the past two years and fits perfectly with the rest of what he said in Helsinki. Now that is the sentence that the president wants us to believe should be read as “I don’t see any reason why it wouldn’t be” because that, of course, is what he clearly meant. Hence my reference to the White House’s childlike faith in unlimited stupidity.

Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Dan Coats did not wait for Tuesday’s faux walkback. I suspect that he immediately knew he had a problem, not just with the administration’s relationship with the truth but also with a workforce increasingly questioning if they still were part of a good thing or if what they did still mattered. Without White House clearance, and while the president was still

in the air returning to North America, Coats issued a statement repeating the intelligence community’s judgment — the Russians did it! — and commitment to continue to tell the truth.

Coats already had set the table for this. On the preceding Friday — the same day that Mueller’s office indicted 12 officers in Putin’s military intelligence service, the GRU, for election interference, and three days in advance of the Trump-Putin summit — Coats gave a major speech in downtown Washington, echoing former CIA director George Tenet’s summer 2001 warning about Al Qaeda, that the system was blinking red and that Russian “actions are persistent, they are pervasive and they are meant to undermine America’s democracy.”

Much of official and unofficial Washington agreed with Coats, and so we got Tuesday’s “limited, modified” walkback (for younger generations wondering, that is a Watergate reference) that appears to have been imposed on the president by his staff. He had to read the statement that the Russians did it from a prepared script but then could not resist the temptation to ad lib that “it could be other people also.”

On Wednesday, the president undercut Coats, his senior intelligence adviser, yet again by appearing to say “no” when asked at a press spray whether or not the Russians continue to attack the United States. This was the exact opposite of Coats’s message just a few days before and what FBI Director Christopher Wray reiterated a few hours after the press spray, during an interview at the Aspen Security Forum.

Americans are not stupid. But they are busy. They cannot afford the time to parse out these events the way a retired or current director of this or that agency can. The president is counting on that. But the truth of the matter is that the American government knows what happened, and what continues to happen. The American government, as opposed to the president, continues to state that truth. That is an amazing state of affairs, but it is where we are. We should at least be grateful that some very senior people seem willing to die on this hill on our behalf.

Gen. Michael Hayden is a former director of the CIA and of the National Security Agency. He is now a visiting professor in the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University and author of “The Assault on Intelligence: American National Security in an Age of Lies.”

Brennan And The 2016 Spy Scandal

Obama’s CIA director acknowledges egging on the FBI’s probe of Trump and Russia.

By Kimberley A. Strassel

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Why Russia Will Help The Democrats Next

By GARRETT M. GRAFF

[Politico Magazine](#), July 19, 2018

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats warned last week that the nation is under sustained cyberattack from foreign adversaries like Russia. “I’m here to say, the warning lights are blinking red again,” Coats said, echoing the comments of former CIA Director George Tenet about the summer of 2001. “The warning signs are there. The system is blinking. It is why I believe we are at a critical point.”

Coats’ remarks reinforced consistent warnings, from current and former national security officials over the past year, that Russia is moving forward with more attacks on the midterm elections.

Story Continued Below

And why shouldn’t the Russians do more? Their multipronged 2016 attack, outlined in repeated indictments this year by special counsel Robert Mueller, was a resounding success, and in the nearly two years since, the United States has taken no meaningful action to change Russia’s calculation that the risk-reward of attacking American democracy is worth it.

“There should be no doubt that Russia perceives its past efforts as successful and views the 2018 U.S. midterm elections as a potential target for Russian influence operations,” Coats said in February. “We expect Russia to continue using propaganda, social media, false-flag personas, sympathetic spokespeople and other means of influence to try to exacerbate social and political fissures in the United States.”

What makes the American government’s ongoing inaction—and the general myopia on Capitol Hill and at the White House around the cyber threat—so stunning is the simple fact that the Republicans in charge of the executive and legislative branches should be terrified that they’re next. The 2016 attacks by Russia boosted President Donald Trump and undermined Hillary Clinton’s campaign, but there’s no guarantee that the next nation-state considering the electoral landscape will back the Republicans.

In fact, almost the opposite. There’s solid geopolitical evidence that boosting the Democrats would be a smart strategy for a foreign actor this fall.

Vladimir Putin’s goal isn’t—and never was—to help the Republican Party, at least in the long run. Boosting Trump’s presidential campaign was a means to Putin’s end: Weakening the West, and exploiting the seams and divisions of the West’s open democracies to undermine

our legitimacy and moral standing. Russia accomplished that with great success in 2016—and it’s a strategy that is continuing to pay dividends today. “Their purpose was to sow discontent and mistrust in our elections; they wanted us to be at each others’ throat when it was over,” former chairman of the House Intelligence Committee Mike Rogers said last year. “It’s influencing, I would say, legislative process today. That’s wildly successful.”

Just look at the past week of foreign policy, during which Trump slammed NATO, insulted German Chancellor Angela Merkel, undermined British Prime Minister Theresa May and the government of our closest ally, called Europe a “foe,” and mused out loud about whether he would honor the foundational mutual-defense premise of NATO. Not to mention the bizarre news conference with Putin that the BBC summed up as: “Trump sides with Russia against FBI at Helsinki summit.” It would have been hard for Putin to plan a more effective week to undermine and divide the West if he had orchestrated and stage-managed the entire process from a Kremlin whiteboard.

As former FBI Director James Comey explained Putin’s strategy: “It’s not about Republicans or Democrats. They’re coming after America, which I hope we all love equally. They want to undermine our credibility in the face the world. They think that this great experiment of ours is a threat to them. And so they’re going to try to run it down and dirty it up as much as possible. That’s what this is about, and they will be back. Because we remain—as difficult as we can be with each other—we remain that shining city on the hill. And they don’t like it.”

The Russian attack in 2016 was a nearly perfect asymmetric assault. Although it was expansive and expensive—the Internet Research Agency effort alone employed hundreds of people and cost upwards of \$1.25 million a month, according to Mueller’s indictment—it was highly cost-effective, perhaps the most effective intelligence operation in modern history, all achieved at very little political cost to Russia and at little risk to its personnel. As Comey said, “We’re talking about a foreign government that, using technical intrusion, lots of other methods, tried to shape the way we think, we vote, we act. That is a big deal. And people need to recognize it.”

The next round of election attacks may not even stem from Russia. Other nation-state adversaries—particularly America’s three other leading cyber adversaries, China, North Korea and Iran—have surely taken note. It would be all but espionage malpractice for them not to be out there plotting right now about how to achieve the same results by following Russia’s now tried-and-tested model. That’s especially true as they watch the wishy-washy response to Russia’s attack from

the White House: The U.S. government has taken no meaningful action that would discourage Russia from interfering again, in 2018 and 2020—and we're spending another week consumed by the very question of whether Russia even did attack us. The White House, meanwhile, has even done away with the National Security Council's cybersecurity coordinator position, downgrading the role that has served as the government's main point person on cyber—meaning that if an attack did occur this fall, our response might even be slower and less coordinated than the response was in 2016.

These are hardly the actions of a government inclined to rain down meaningful, damaging punishment on someone coming to attack voting machines in Arizona.

There's a good argument to be made that China, for one, might look at our congressional elections and think that helping the Democrats in 2018 would be best for them. While much of our focus on Trump's bull-in-a-multilateral-china-shop approach to foreign policy has focused on his attacks on Canada, Europe and Africa, or his inexplicable coddling of Putin and Russia, there's no country that has benefited more from his presidency than the rising and increasingly aggressive and authoritarian China.

As we retreat from international alliances, China has stepped into that vacuum. Trump's temper tantrums have given China the time and space to build new relationships around the Pacific Rim, to pursue their mega-One Belt One Road project and to chip away at the international security alliances that have made the Pacific an American lake for 50 years.

One way for China to extend the period of a vacuum of American leadership: Throw the Senate to the Dems, ensuring not just two years of oversight hearings but also fraught nomination fights that would leave the government understaffed and under-resourced and unable to engage thoughtfully with the rest of the world.

Democratic control of one or both houses of Congress might, from a brass tacks Chinese or Russian perspective, guarantee two years of a paralyzed America, a country continuing to look inward, not outward. And Democratic control of Congress could help arrest Trump's trade war, which actually could be harming China's growth and rise—and the one thing China can't afford to lose right now is its economic growth. A Democratic House might lead to a polarizing impeachment fight that would further exacerbate America's political divides and weaken the country globally, at least in the short term.

China doesn't need to sideline the U.S. forever—just long enough to have built itself into the global

military and economic superpower befitting its status as the world's most populous nation. Two or four more years of America refusing to engage on the world stage and undermining rules-based systems like the World Trade Organization, and of President Trump storming out of G-7 summits would go a long way toward giving China the space it needs to solidify new alliances and build new systems that aren't focused on the post-World War II Bretton Woods-style comity that aided the U.S. over the past 70 years.

Similarly, Russia might decide that its aid to Trump was so successful, that he's been so effective at advancing Putin's goals, that they want to keep him in power past 2020. A good way to help Trump get reelected is to give him a Democratic Congress to rail against for the next two years. There's a pretty straightforward trend in American electoral politics: Recent incumbent presidents lose ground in the midterms, then win second terms.

Iran, of course, is another capable cyber adversary that has a big bone to pick with Trump: the death of the nuclear deal that was letting the Islamic Republic re-enter the global economy. What if Iran decides that they want to go after Republican Sen. Tom Cotton, its fiercest critic and a Trump backer?

If it weren't for the president's fragile ego, it would be easy for Republican lawmakers to say, "We don't think the Russian effort affected the 2016 election, but we can't take the chance that similar efforts in the future ever succeed." And then throw themselves into an all-out, no-expense-spared, herculean effort to lock down every county-level voter system, ensure paper backups in every elementary school gymnasium voting precinct, install two-factor authentication on every GOP congressional campaign email account, and pound the social media platforms every day to remove disinformation, minimize bots and trolls and block dark-money ads.

Remember that Dick Cheney led the nation into the War on Terror with the so-called "One-Percent Doctrine," his idea that if there was an even a 1 percent chance that terrorists were pursuing a nuclear weapon, "We have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response."

The odds that a foreign government is coming back to attack our election this fall in 2018, or in 2020, are far, far greater than 1 percent.

We should all care about securing our elections against foreign interference, for many patriotic reasons. But even if Trump and the Republican Party's turn-the-other-cheek approach to Russia's cyber attacks is based on crass self-interest, they should rethink their silence.

There's no guarantee that today's allies are tomorrow's allies.

Journalist Garrett M. Graff (@vermontgmg) is the author of *The Threat Matrix: The FBI at War*, and a former editor of

Politico Magazine. His new book, *Raven Rock*, about the U.S. government's Doomsday plans, was published this month. He can be reached at garrett.graff@gmail.com.

America's Factory Towns, Once Solidly Blue, Are Now A GOP Haven

By Bob Davis And Dante Chinni

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Liberal Blind Spots Are Hiding The Truth About 'Trump Country'

By Sarah Smarsh

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

Is the white working class an angry, backward monolith — some 90 million white Americans without college degrees, all standing around in factories and fields thumping their dirty hands with baseball bats? You might think so after two years of media fixation on this version of the aggrieved laborer: male, Caucasian, conservative, racist, sexist.

This account does white supremacy a great service in several ways: It ignores workers of color, along with humane, even progressive white workers. It allows college-educated white liberals to signal superior virtue while denying the sins of their own place and class. And it conceals well-informed, formally educated white conservatives — from middle-class suburbia to the highest ranks of influence — who voted for Donald Trump in legions.

The trouble begins with language: Elite pundits regularly misuse “working class” as shorthand for right-wing white guys wearing tool belts. My father, a white man and lifelong construction worker who labors alongside immigrants and people of color on job sites across the Midwest and South working for a Kansas-based general contractor owned by a woman, would never make such an error.

Most struggling whites I know live lives of quiet desperation mad at their white bosses, not resentment of their co-workers or neighbors of color. My dad's previous three bosses were all white men he loathed for abuses of privilege and people.

It is unfair power that my father despises. The last rant I heard him on was not about race or immigration

but about the recent royal wedding, the spectacle of which made him sick.

“What's so special about the royals?” he told me over the phone from a cheap motel after work. “But they'll get the best health care, the best education, the best food. Meanwhile I'm in Marion, Arkansas. All I want is some chickens and a garden and place to go fishing once in a while.”

What my father seeks is not a return to times that were worse for women and people of color but progress toward a society in which everyone can get by, including his white, college-educated son who graduated into the Great Recession and for 10 years sold his own plasma for gas money. After being laid off during that recession in 2008, my dad had to cash in his retirement to make ends meet while looking for another job. He has labored nearly every day of his life and has no savings beyond Social Security.

Yes, my father is angry at someone. But it is not his co-worker Gem, a Filipino immigrant with whom he has split a room to pocket some of the per diem from their employer, or Francisco, a Hispanic crew member with whom he recently built a Wendy's north of Memphis. His anger, rather, is directed at bosses who exploit labor and governments that punish the working poor — two sides of a capitalist democracy that bleeds people like him dry.

“Corporations,” Dad said. “That's it. That's the point of the sword that's killing us.”

Among white workers, this negative energy has been manipulated to great political effect by a conservative trifecta in media, private interest and celebrity that we might call Fox, Koch and Trump.

As my dad told me, “There's jackasses on every level of the food chain — but those jackasses are the ones that play all these other jackasses.”

Still, millions of white working-class people have refused to be played. They have resisted the traps of racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia and nationalism and voted the other way — or, in too many cases, not voted at all. I am far less interested in calls for empathy toward struggling white Americans who spout or abide hatred than I am in tapping into the political power of those who don't.

Like many Midwestern workers I know, my dad has more in common ideologically with the Bronx's Democratic Socialist congressional candidate Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez than with the white Republicans who run our state. Having spent most of his life doing dangerous, underpaid work without health insurance, he supports the ideas of single-payer health care and a universal basic income.

Much has been made of the white working class's political shift to the right. But Mr. Trump won among white college graduates, too. According to those same exit polls trotted out to blame the "uneducated," 49 percent of whites with degrees picked Mr. Trump, while 45 percent picked Hillary Clinton (among them, support for Mr. Trump was stronger among men). Such Americans hardly "vote against their own best interest." Media coverage suggests that economically distressed whiteness elected Mr. Trump, when in fact it was just plain whiteness.

Stories dispelling the persistent notion that bigotry is the sole province of "uneducated" people in derided "flyover" states are right before our eyes: A white man caught on camera assaulting a black man at a white-supremacist rally last August in Charlottesville, Va., was recently identified as a California engineer. This year, a white male lawyer berated restaurant workers for speaking Spanish in New York City. A white, female, Stanford-educated chemical engineer called the Oakland, Calif., police on a family for, it would appear, barbecuing while black.

Among the 30 states tidily declared "red" after the 2016 election, in two-thirds of them Mrs. Clinton received 35 to 48 percent of the vote. My white working-class family was part of that large minority, rendered invisible by the Electoral College and graphics that paint each state red or blue.

In the meantime, critical stories here in "red states" go underdiscussed and underreported, including:

Barriers to voting. Forces more influential than the political leanings of a white factory worker decide election outcomes: gerrymandering, super PACs, corrupt officials. In Kansas, Secretary of State Kris Kobach blocked 30,000 would-be voters from casting ballots (and was recently held in contempt of federal court for doing so).

Different information sources. Some of my political views shifted when my location, peer group and news sources changed during my college years. Many Americans today have a glut of information but poor media literacy — hard to rectify if you work on your feet all day, don't own a computer and didn't get a chance to learn the vocabulary of national discourse.

Populism on the left. Today, "populism" is often used interchangeably with "far right." But the American left is experiencing a populist boom. According to its national director, Democratic Socialists of America nearly quadrupled in size from 2016 to 2017 — and saw its biggest one-day boost the day after Ms. Ocasio-Cortez's recent primary upset. Progressive congressional candidates with working-class backgrounds and platforms have major support heading into the midterms

here in Kansas, including the white civil rights attorney James Thompson, who grew up in poverty, and Sharice Davids, a Native American Army veteran who would be the first openly lesbian representative from Kansas.

To find a more accurate vision of these United States, we must resist pat narratives about any group — including the working class on whom our current political situation is most often pinned. The greatest con of 2016 was not persuading a white laborer to vote for a nasty billionaire with soft hands. Rather, it was persuading a watchdog press to cast every working-class American in the same mold. The resulting national conversation, which seeks to rename my home "Trump Country," elevates a white supremacist agenda by undermining resistance and solidarity where it is most urgent and brave.

Amid Worker Shortage, Trump Signs Job Training Order

By Glenn Thrush

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump, responding to companies' struggles with a shortage of skilled workers that has left more than six million jobs unfilled nationwide, signed an executive order Thursday geared at better aligning government training programs with the demands of industry.

The order creates a Council for the American Worker, led by the secretaries of commerce and labor, that will focus on consolidating existing federal programs and funding new job training initiatives, with a special concentration on expanding apprenticeship programs and retraining older workers without college degrees.

As part of the effort, companies and trade unions have committed to funding nearly four million slots for apprenticeships, retraining and continuing education programs over the next five years.

Job training has emerged as one of the few coordinated policy initiatives generated in the West Wing with broad appeal across income and party lines. In part, that is because many labor and corporate leaders are struggling to expand their work force, and several top White House officials, including Kevin Hassett, the chairman of Mr. Trump's Council of Economic Advisers, have made the issue a top priority.

In the run-up to Thursday's announcement, R. Alexander Acosta, the labor secretary, announced \$150 million in funding pegged to a June 2017 executive order that was intended to strengthen apprenticeship programs targeting new industries, veterans and their spouses, women, people of color, and ex-offenders.

"It isn't as massive as I'd like to see, but there is a lot of activity going on now at the federal and state levels on apprenticeships and worker training," said Bob Lerman, a fellow at the nonpartisan Urban Institute who studies apprenticeship programs. "It's all helpful, even if I'd like to see something that is a little better coordinated."

Mr. Trump will also convene an advisory panel of industry, union and corporate leaders to ensure that federal programs are more closely aligned to the labor demands of industry. In June, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that there were 6.7 million job openings, with only 6.4 million workers available to fill them.

"Today, 23 companies and associations are pledging to expand apprenticeships. That's an interesting word for me to be saying, right? 'The Apprentice,'" Mr. Trump said at a White House signing ceremony.

"I never actually put that together until just now," he said, calling to his daughter Ivanka, who is working on the jobs initiative. "Isn't that strange? Ivanka, I never associated, but here we are."

The initiative is meant to underscore Mr. Trump's commitment to the mainly working-class "forgotten Americans" whom Republicans are hoping to attract in the 2018 midterm elections, aides said.

"Every day we are getting our forgotten Americans off the sidelines," the president said.

True to Mr. Trump's "Apprentice" reference, Thursday's ceremony had the pomp of a reality-show reveal episode. The trade association officials, corporate executives, union leaders and politicians sat at a table and signed, one by one, a "Pledge to America's Workers," promising to "create enhanced career opportunities," beneath a gilded presidential seal.

It is not clear exactly how many workers will be assisted by the pledges made on Thursday. Companies made their commitments in terms of slots — placements in various programs — with Walmart vowing to create a million such opportunities, and a buildings trade union promising another half-million.

Most of the companies and organizations in attendance had already planned to greatly increase their job training and apprenticeship programs, as part of an effort to counter what many business executives see as a labor crisis that could limit their growth.

White House staff members had initially asked participants to base their numerical pledges on the number of apprenticeship slots their organization planned to set aside. That number totaled about 500,000, according to two trade association representatives.

But earlier this week, aides to Mr. Trump, apparently disappointed with that number, expanded the definition of "career opportunities" to include many other initiatives, including retraining of workers inside companies for different jobs, continuing education programs and other measures intended to burnish worker skills.

Trade groups like the Aerospace Industry Association included new initiatives to create skills certification programs that would be portable from company to company.

Still, industry executives applauded Mr. Trump's actions, and described the order as a catalyst that could spur others to take action. "We are encouraged by the administration's commitment to ensuring American workers develop the appropriate skills and have access to the training needed for today's in-demand jobs and the jobs of the future," said Frederick W. Smith, chairman and chief executive of FedEx, which committed to 512,000 work-force development slots, including tuition assistance programs.

While work-force development advocates praised the executive order, some expressed puzzlement at the seeming disconnect with Mr. Trump's budget proposals, which included a 40 percent cut to the Labor Department's funding for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the biggest federal worker retraining program.

"It's been a little bit of a Jekyll and Hyde thing," said Kermit Kaleba, federal policy director for the nonpartisan National Skills Coalition. "The real test is whether the administration comes back next year with the same proposal to slash spending."

Trump Calls Scott Walker 'A Favorite Of Mine' As He Praises Foxconn Deal

By Patrick Marley

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#), July 19, 2018

President Donald Trump called Gov. Scott Walker "a favorite of mine" Thursday and praised Foxconn Technology Group's plans in Wisconsin as Walker pursues a broad effort to promote the company around the state.

In recent weeks, Foxconn has announced plans to open offices in Green Bay and Eau Claire. Those moves will help Walker make the case that the \$4 billion incentive package for the Taiwanese tech giant will improve the economy for all of Wisconsin, not just the one in its southeastern corner.

The GOP governor got some help with that from Trump on Thursday, when the two appeared together at the White House.

"Scott Walker, you know who this is, right?" Trump said as he shook the hand of Foxconn special adviser Chris "Tank" Murdoch. "He's building the most incredible plant you've even seen in Wisconsin, right, Scott?"

Murdoch said Foxconn is "bringing an industry back to America that hasn't been here in probably at least 30 years, which is advanced electronic manufacturing, and we're going to bring that into southeast Wisconsin."

Thursday's ceremony was focused on adding jobs and training workers, but it also created a chance for Walker and Trump to once again put a national spotlight on Foxconn. As part of the event, representatives of Foxconn and about two dozen other companies and trade associations signed a pledge to workers.

But the White House event came at an awkward time for Trump and Walker because of wide-ranging probes into Russian interference into politics.

Trump has taken fire from members of his own party for downplaying Russian interference in his meeting this week with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

And Walker has had to explain how he came to have his photo taken in 2015 with a woman now accused of being a Russian agent. (Walker has said he talked to the woman briefly when she and another Russian approached him in 2015 at a National Rifle Association convention to get their photo with him, just as many of his supporters have.)

Also on Thursday, Democratic U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin was among the co-sponsors of the bipartisan DETER Act, which would sanction Russia for any future election meddling. Sens. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) introduced the bill.

Baldwin said: "Russia's interference in our elections cannot be dismissed or ignored. Congress has a responsibility to take action and impose costs on those who would attack American democracy."

Democrats seized on Trump calling Walker "a favorite of mine" and noted that Trump had trashed Walker in the past, including when they were both seeking the GOP nomination for president.

T.J. Helmstetter, a spokesman for the Wisconsin Democratic Party, contended Walker was putting his political interests above those of the state.

"Walker may be a 'favorite' of Trump's, but Wisconsinites are ready for a change after eight long years of Walker's failures," Helmstetter said in a statement.

Members of Congress — including Rep. Sean Duffy from northern Wisconsin — and members of Trump's cabinet attended the White House event. Walker was the only governor there.

Foxconn has said it would invest as much as \$10 billion in its Mount Pleasant plant and create up to 13,000 jobs.

Walker has portrayed the plan as one that will transform Wisconsin's economy, while Democrats have called it a bad deal. They have contended the company won't produce nearly as many jobs as it says it will.

Eight Democrats are running in the Aug. 14 primary to challenge Walker this fall and all of them oppose the Foxconn deal. One of them, former state Democratic Party Chairman Matt Flynn, has said he would sue to end the deal on his first day as governor and is focused on the issue in an ad that is to begin running Friday.

The public's view of Foxconn is mixed. In a Marquette University Law School poll released Wednesday, 46% believed the state is paying more to bring the company to Wisconsin than it is worth, while 39% believed the state will get at least as much value out of the plant as it invests in it.

The biggest problem for Walker is on what people believe the deal will mean in their area. Just 30% of poll respondents believed it would directly benefit businesses in the area where they lived, while 58% believed it would not.

Those views are more pronounced outside of southeastern Wisconsin. For instance, 72% of respondents in northwestern Wisconsin believed the development would not benefit businesses in their area. In the Green Bay area, 62% felt that way.

To counter those attitudes, Walker has been promoting Foxconn's plans to establish offices elsewhere in the state. On Monday, he stopped in Eau Claire to announce the company would create 150 jobs there. Last month, he made a similar announcement in Green Bay for a center that is expected to create 200 jobs.

Trump On EU's \$5B Fine Against Google: 'I Told You So!'

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump says the European Union's record \$5 billion fine against tech giant Google proves his point that the EU is taking advantage of the U.S.

Trump is engaged in a running dispute with the EU over trade. Trump has imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from the EU and is considering levies against European automobiles sold in the U.S. He recently described the EU, which includes some of America's strongest allies, as a "foe" of the U.S.

Trump tweets Thursday: "I told you so! The European Union just slapped a Five Billion Dollar fine on one of our great companies, Google. They truly have taken advantage of the U.S., but not for long!"

Trump and EU leaders are expected to meet at the White House next week.

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President Trump Says 'I Told You So!' After Europe Fines Google \$5 Billion

By Tony Romm And James McAuley

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump on Thursday attacked the European Union over its decision to fine Google \$5 billion for harming its competitors, tweeting that the incident proved the regional bloc has "taken advantage of the U.S., but not for long!"

To Trump, the fine appeared to serve as the latest evidence of Europe's exploitation of the United States on a variety of matters, including trade and other nations' contributions to defense spending, and it came a day after he threatened "tremendous retribution," particularly on European-made cars if the E.U. doesn't change its policies.

European leaders, however, showed no sign of backing down Thursday — with one official pledging in Brussels that they could adopt their own "rebalancing measures" if the U.S. government proceeds fresh new auto tariffs.

I told you so! The European Union just slapped a Five Billion Dollar fine on one of our great companies, Google. They truly have taken advantage of the U.S., but not for long!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 19, 2018

On Wednesday, the European Union found that Google harmed consumers and competitors for pushing its search and web-browsing tools on the makers of Android-equipped mobile devices. The fine marked the second time in about a year that regional regulators have needled Google for its business practices.

In doing so, Margrethe Vestager, the E.U.'s top competition official, stressed the fine was proportional to Google's revenue and not motivated by recent transatlantic disputes. Her investigation of the search giant, in fact, predates Trump's arrival at the White House.

"I very much like the U.S.," Vestager told reporters at a press conference Wednesday, adding: "We have to protect consumers and competition . . . this is what we

do. It has been done before, we will continue to do it, no matter the political context."

The E.U.'s penalty still stood in stark contrast with the United States, where federal antitrust regulators previously investigated Google's search and advertising businesses but concluded their probe in 2013 without bringing major penalties against the tech giant. Since then, Democrats and Republicans alike have mused whether the Federal Trade Commission, an independent agency, should open a new investigation into Google's sprawling footprint.

"The FTC should end its decade of inaction and deference, and confront the mounting evidence that Google's business practices have stifled robust competition in a market that is critical to our economy and society," said Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal in a statement Wednesday. "Europe should not be alone setting the agenda."

A spokeswoman for the European Commission declined to comment on Trump's tweet. But the aide added that Jean-Claude Juncker's trip to Washington D.C. on July 25 will be a "good opportunity" for the commission's president to discuss all matters related to the tense transatlantic relations.

Meanwhile, the European Union's trade commissioner, Cecilia Malmström, reiterated Thursday that the response to Trump's tariffs will be strong, as the bloc looks to preserve the essence of the postwar transatlantic relationship.

"The EU does not want to escalate the situation," she said. "However, we have had no choice but to respond. We are not prepared to walk away from what we built together, to let the global order fade away like an old memory. So we have taken action in a way that is reasonable, proportionate and in accordance with international rules."

As he grapples with Europe, Trump also has struggled to befriend the tech industry: He's attacked companies, such as Apple and Amazon.com, while the leaders of those companies and their peers have blasted the president in return for his approach to issues, such as immigration and climate change. (Amazon chief executive Jeff Bezos is the owner of The Washington Post.)

But Trump's new broadside against the E.U. for investigating Google may elate many of its digital counterparts, which have struggled to escape the scrutiny — and strong punishments — of Silicon Valley's skeptics across the Atlantic.

In recent years, Vestager has penalized Apple for failing to pay its taxes and fined Facebook for a series of privacy mishaps, including a punishment last week from the United Kingdom for the social giant's entanglement

with Cambridge Analytica. In May, the European Union also began implementing tough, new rules on how tech firms can collect, store and monetize users' data, a privacy regime that could result in massive fines for offending companies.

And Vestager on Wednesday even promised further scrutiny of Google, stressing as she announced her \$5 billion fine — a new record for the E.U. — that regulators are probing other elements of the company's search and advertising business. Google has already said it would appeal her Android decision.

Writer Quentin Aries contributed to this report.

Trump Bashes E.U. Over \$5.1 Billion Fine For Google

By Prashant S. Rao

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump resumed his criticism of the European Union on Thursday, assailing the bloc for the record antitrust fine it levied against the Silicon Valley giant Google this week.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly denounced the 28-nation group, America's biggest trading partner, for what he says are its unfair economic policies. His administration has imposed stiff tariffs on aluminum and steel imported from European Union companies, and is also considering placing similarly hefty levies on European cars and car parts.

The president's broader protectionist push, his specific labeling of the European Union as a "foe" on the issue of trade and his remarks raising questions about his commitment to NATO have led to a substantial cooling of the relationship between the longtime trans-Atlantic allies.

The European countries have sought to tamp down the rhetoric — Jean-Claude Juncker, the European Commission president, is to meet with Mr. Trump next week — but they have also refused to back down in the face of the president's threatened tariffs.

On Thursday, Mr. Trump said in a message posted on Twitter that the European Union's \$5.1 billion fine against Google, a punishment for its anticompetitive practices in the smartphone market, was a slap against "one of our great companies."

"They truly have taken advantage of the U.S.," Mr. Trump wrote, adding a suggestion of retribution to come. "but not for long!"

The fine, of 4.34 billion euros, was by far the largest ever handed down in Europe for antitrust violations, and was coupled with a demand that Google loosen its grip on its Android mobile operating system or risk further financial penalties.

It was the latest move by European regulators to crack down on American technology companies. Officials across the region have pursued tougher rules on data privacy and competition, while also investigating Silicon Valley firms over their tax practices and other matters. Those firms, whose services are extremely popular in Europe, have complained that they are being unfairly targeted, a claim that officials in the region deny.

Trump Says The EU's \$5 Billion Fine On Google Is The Real Trade War: 'I Told You So!'

By S.A. Miller

[Washington Times](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump said Thursday that the European Union's record \$5 billion fine on Google was part of the trade bloc's anti-U.S. policies.

I told you so! The European Union just slapped a Five Billion Dollar fine on one of our great companies, Google. They truly have taken advantage of the U.S., but not for long! — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 19, 2018

The trade skirmish will take center stage Wednesday when European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker visits the White House.

Mr. Trump has made the EU a top target in his get-tough trade agenda, including threatening to hike tariffs to as high as 25 percent on European cars.

He insists the EU for decades has taken advantage of the U.S. though lopsided trade deals.

EU antitrust regulators hit Google with the \$5 billion fine Wednesday, saying its deal with Android phone companies to preinstall Google apps was unfair to competitors.

Google contends Android phone have expanded competition, with users downloading an average 50 apps.

Though the fine sounds huge, it would amount to two weeks of revenue for Google parent Alphabet Inc., which has \$102.9 billion in cash reserves.

Nice Try, But The E.U.'s Case Against Google Won't Make Tech More Competitive

By The Editorial Board

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

European and American officials need to find more effective ways to ensure competition in industries dominated by a handful of big players.

The editorial board represents the opinions of the board, its editor and the publisher. It is separate from the newsroom and the Op-Ed section.

The European Union's decision to fine Google \$5.1 billion for abusing its dominance in the smartphone business unearthed some dubious corporate practices, but the penalty and an order for Google to change its practices are, regrettably, unlikely to make the technology industry more competitive.

After a yearslong investigation, Europe's top antitrust official, Margrethe Vestager, on Wednesday said that Google had unfairly exploited its market power by imposing restrictions on manufacturers like Samsung that use the company's Android software on their smartphones. This case is important because about 80 percent of smartphones sold in Europe and globally run on Android, and Google is by far the largest player in internet search. The company is also the biggest player in online advertising, with a nearly 40 percent market share last year, and it has a commanding presence in a number of other internet businesses, like video, email and maps.

The European Union had three main complaints: Google required cellphone companies that wanted to offer its Play app store or search to preinstall 11 of its apps as a bundle, whether they wanted all of them or not. The company gave the largest manufacturers money if the only search they installed was Google's. And the company prohibited manufacturers from developing phones on altered versions of Android not approved by Google if they wanted to use any of its other services. The company strongly disputed the allegation that its practices are anticompetitive, arguing that they are designed to help recoup Google's investment in Android, which it licenses free to device manufacturers. Google, which plans to appeal the decision, asserts that Android is a much more open and competitive platform than its main rival, which is used by the iPhone, in which Apple controls both the device and the software. Indeed, Android devices tend to be cheaper than iPhones because manufacturers like Samsung, Motorola and LG make competing phones.

The European case is strongest when it argues against Google's exclusionary requirements — that cellphone makers not produce devices with other versions of Android and that they install only the Google search app. Such contractual terms serve to limit consumer choices and squelch innovation by making it harder for people to discover alternatives to Google products. But the regulator is on much weaker ground when it asserts that by making its apps and services available only as a bundle, Google is hurting consumers. Smartphone companies like Samsung also preinstall apps that compete with Google's and users can easily download software by other developers — something many people do.

But the larger problem with the union's case is that it's unlikely to shake Google's dominance. For starters, while a \$5.1 billion fine is large in absolute terms, it's a relative bargain for Google and its parent company, Alphabet, which had \$103 billion in cash and securities warming its accounts at the end of March and had nearly \$13 billion in profits last year. Even more important, billions of people around the world are already accustomed to using the company's apps and services on their Android phones and are likely to stick to them. Even new users will most likely gravitate toward Google even if the company's apps are not preinstalled because of the superiority of many of its products and because so many other people use them — the so-called network effect.

This case highlights the importance of more proactive and thoughtful antitrust enforcement and regulation. For example, officials in Europe and the United States need to be more vigilant about blocking mergers and acquisitions that have allowed tech platforms like Google's to become so dominant in the first place. They could also seek to impose rules to limit the use of exclusionary contracts in oligopolistic industries like technology and telecommunications to encourage more competition.

Regrettably, that does not seem to be a top priority for the Trump administration. The head of the Justice Department's antitrust division, Makan Delrahim, recently told The Financial Times that big tech companies' buying smaller businesses could bring "great efficiencies." He cited the example of Google acquiring YouTube in 2006. In fact, a compelling argument could be made that the online video business would be much more competitive and innovative had officials blocked that acquisition.

For his part, President Trump absurdly sought to turn the European Union's case into another example of how European officials are taking "advantage" of the United States.

Antitrust officials have a difficult job: By the time they bring enforcement cases it can be hard to reverse the harm that has already been done. It is also difficult to foresee and prevent bad outcomes. That's why it is important that lawmakers and regulators use all the tools they have to encourage competition and fair play.

EU, Mexico Automakers Blast Trump Auto Tariff Plan

By David Shephardson
[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

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Wilbur Ross: “Too Early To Say” Whether National Security Probe Will Bring Auto Tariffs

Commerce Department hearings are part of an investigation into whether a 1962 law can be used to impose duties on foreign-sourced cars and car parts

By Josh Zumbrun And Chester Dawson

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

On Trump’s Car Tariffs, Companies Are United In Dissent

By Ana Swanson

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

WASHINGTON — Richard Smallwood describes himself as a “pretty far right-wing conservative” who has long been a supporter of President Trump. But like many in the auto industry, Mr. Smallwood, the president of tire company Sumitomo Rubber North America, has been puzzled and dismayed by the president’s proposal to slap tariffs on foreign automobiles and their parts.

“He’s the president of the United States, and I just sell tires,” said Mr. Smallwood, whose company imports tires from abroad. “I have to be careful about second-guessing him, but I wish it were a more logical approach.”

On Thursday, Mr. Smallwood joined other small business owners, along with representatives from the biggest auto companies and foreign countries at a United States trade commission hearing on the sweeping auto tariffs the Trump administration is now considering. Unlike previous hearings on the administration’s metals tariffs, which drew some support, the testimony of those scheduled to appear on Thursday was almost uniformly negative and punctuated with concerns about how tariffs would raise their costs, stifle innovation and dampen their plans for expansion and hiring.

“Every aspect of the U.S. automotive value chain is united in its concern on this issue,” said John Bozella, the chief executive of Global Automakers, which represents international car companies. “You cannot find a company that has asked for this protection.”

Labor unions have been more supportive of the Trump administration’s efforts, though they have warned about the potential harm of disrupting global supply chains and urged Mr. Trump to proceed carefully. In

testimony on Thursday morning, Jennifer Kelly, the director of research development at the United Automobile Workers union, said that American workers had been harmed by decades of offshoring, and that a comprehensive investigation into the impact of foreign cars and car parts on domestic manufacturing was “long overdue.”

“We caution that any rash actions could have unforeseen consequences, including mass layoffs of American workers,” Ms. Kelly said, adding “but that doesn’t mean we should do nothing.”

In May, the Commerce Department said it would investigate whether auto imports threaten American national security, by reducing domestic research and development in cutting-edge technologies. The investigation is just one of many trade measures the administration has taken as it tries to revive American manufacturing, a key campaign promise of Mr. Trump. The administration has already imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum and, on Wednesday, said it would begin another security-related investigation into uranium.

But the potential size of the auto tariffs would dwarf those other measures. While the Trump administration has imposed tariffs on around \$48 billion of steel and aluminum imports, the new tariffs could be levied on roughly \$351 billion of automobile and auto part imports.

Mr. Trump himself has threatened levies of 20 or 25 percent on foreign cars and implied that such penalties could help the United States negotiate better terms for trade with Mexico, Canada and the European Union. He and other administration officials say the United States is at a disadvantage and that better trade deals could ultimately add American jobs.

Yet auto companies have warned that erecting barriers to trade could be devastating for what is a highly globalized industry, in which cars and their parts are manufactured and shipped around the world.

Even cars with the highest percentages of American-made content regularly source a quarter or a third of their parts from elsewhere in the world, industry statistics show. Last year, 52 percent of cars sold in the United States were manufactured inside the country, with nearly half of those made by international firms like BMW, Daimler and Honda, according to the Center for Automotive Research, a nonprofit research firm.

[Read more about BMW’s ties to the United States.]

“We would argue that the supply chain allows us to remain competitive in this global market,” Jennifer Thomas, the vice president of federal government affairs at the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, said at the hearing Thursday morning. The group represents global

automakers including Ford, GM, Fiat-Chrysler and foreign brands like Toyota, Honda and Volkswagen.

A study released Thursday by the Center for Automotive Research estimated that tariffs or quotas could cause the price of an average new vehicle sold in the United States to rise by \$980 to \$4,400, depending on the specifics of the policy.

The study, which was commissioned by the National Automobile Dealers Association, found tariffs would increase American vehicle production. But the industry would still lose tens or hundreds of thousands of jobs over all as tariffs reduced employment at auto parts companies and higher prices encouraged consumers to buy fewer cars, leading to lost jobs at dealerships.

A forthcoming study by economists at the Peterson Institute for International Economics has produced similar findings, showing that a 25 percent tariff on all imported cars, trucks and auto parts would raise car prices for buyers by \$1,400 to \$7,000 for the top-selling cars and sport utility vehicles.

In a comment letter submitted to the Commerce Department last month, General Motors cautioned that auto tariffs could lead to "less investment, fewer jobs and lower wages" for its employees.

The president's pledge to impose a hefty tariff before his administration carried out an investigation has sparked fears that the results are already predetermined, especially after the Commerce Department reduced the public hearing to one day rather than two.

"This is a show trial," said Adam Posen, president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, a think tank. "This is the kind of thing autocratic governments do with their economic policy. They don't allow evidence-based processes and rules-based processes to work."

Others have warned that stiff tariffs would probably lead to further retaliation from foreign countries that have already increased their duties on American products in response to Mr. Trump's metal tariffs.

"Just look at what has happened with steel and aluminum," said Rufus Yerma, the president of the National Foreign Trade Council. "When we do this, I'll use a technical trade negotiator's term, all hell's going to break loose. We're not going to end up with a better environment in negotiation."

On Thursday, Alcoa lowered its earnings forecast for 2018, citing aluminum tariffs.

Mr. Trump has been particularly focused on the European Union, which charges a 10 percent tariff on imported cars. The United States levies a tariff of only 2.5 percent on imported cars, though it charges a 25 percent tariff on foreign trucks.

On Wednesday, the president said that he and his advisers could exact "tremendous retribution" on other countries if the negotiations did not turn out in his favor, adding that cars were the "big one" when it comes to United States-Europe trade.

"We want to defuse the situation as soon as possible, before it blows up in our faces," Cecilia Malmstrom, the European Commissioner for Trade, said in Brussels on Wednesday. However, she added, "if the U.S. would impose these car tariffs, we are preparing, together with our member states, a list of rebalancing measures."

Ms. Malmstrom argued that businesses and citizens on both continents would feel the "impact and the pain" of tariffs imposed on cars coming from Europe, because their car industries are deeply interconnected. BMW's X5 model, for instance, she said, is solely manufactured in South Carolina.

"Steel and aluminum measures turned rhetoric into reality," Ms. Malmstrom said, but "similar moves on cars would be disastrous. We are talking about much higher amounts of trade affected."

Ann Wilson, the senior vice president of government affairs of the Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association who testified Thursday morning, said she was concerned that tariffs could stifle innovation in emerging sectors of the auto industry. A survey of her trade group's members showed that companies would respond to higher prices for components like lithium batteries and semiconductors by moving electric and autonomous vehicle research and manufacturing outside the United States.

"If it gets more expensive to bring those technologies into the United States, our suppliers are going to find other places to do research," Ms. Wilson said.

In a letter on Wednesday, 149 members of Congress warned that tariffs aimed at protecting security could backfire.

"We do not believe that imports of automobiles and automotive parts pose a national security threat," the letter read. "Rather, we believe the imposition of trade restrictions on these products could undermine our economic security."

The national security connection has also puzzled Mr. Smallwood, who says that he is deeply "pro-military."

"I'm somebody who believes in protecting America," he said. "But the product coming in doesn't damage any of that. Business is so global now we have to have these global supply chains. To say that because we're importing some part, that it weakens our industry, that's nonsense."

Mr. Smallwood's company imports tires from factories in Japan, Thailand and Indonesia, but it also makes some of its products at one of the country's oldest tire factories, in Buffalo, N.Y. The company had been planning to quadruple production at that Buffalo factory by 2020, but Mr. Smallwood said the higher costs of tariffs will put those plans at risk.

"It just leaves less money for us to invest in modernizing our plant here or hiring new people," he said.

Milan Schreuer contributed reporting.

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Tariffs Imperil A Hometown Business In South Carolina: BMW

By Natalie Kitroeff

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

In the middle of David Britt's campaign to get BMW to put a car factory here, a man grabbed him by the tie while he was in a restaurant.

"Don't give that land to the Germans," the man hissed to Mr. Britt, a county official.

Two decades later, the automaker has become the most important local job creator, earning the affection of a deep-red county where one in 10 people earns a living making vehicles or their parts.

The Spartanburg plant is BMW's biggest in the world. It has helped draw more than 200 companies from two dozen countries to Spartanburg County. And the German company — not an American icon like Ford or General Motors — is now the largest exporter of cars made in the United States, turning the port of Charleston, S.C., into a hub for global trade.

But by setting off a global trade battle, President Trump is threatening the town's livelihood. People aren't happy.

"BMW saved Spartanburg and transformed South Carolina into a manufacturing mecca to the world," said Mr. Britt, a member of the County Council. "When you mess with the golden goose, they're family, and you're messing with me."

On Thursday, the Commerce Department is holding a hearing in Washington on whether imported cars and car parts harm national security, the premise of an administration plan to impose hefty duties. If imposed, the tariffs would most likely have deeper and wider-reaching repercussions for the economy than levies on fish or steel. Cars don't come together in one plant, with one work force — they're the final result of hundreds of companies working together, in a supply chain that can snake through small American towns and cross oceans.

Automakers have lined up to oppose the measure, which they say would make it more expensive to build cars here and would prompt other countries to respond in kind, hurting exports.

China has already increased its levies on cars from the United States. The European Union has promised nearly \$300 billion in retaliatory tariffs.

Mr. Trump puts much of the blame on Europe. The European Union imposes a 10 percent tariff on American-made cars, compared with the 2.5 percent United States levy on European cars. The president recently called the European Union a "foe" and has developed a particularly frosty relationship with Germany, which he has deemed "very bad" on trade. Some workers in South Carolina want Mr. Trump to lay off of their German patrons, but others are happy he's taking them to task for the imbalance.

"Open up the barriers and get rid of your tariffs," Mr. Trump said of the European policies at a March rally in Pennsylvania. "And if you don't do that, we're going to tax Mercedes-Benz, we're going to tax BMW."

Larry Kudlow, the White House economic adviser, said on Wednesday that he expected a "very important" offer on trade when the European Union president, Jean-Claude Juncker, visits Washington next week.

But lashing out at German carmakers could inflict wounds in this upstate swath of South Carolina. In March, BMW's chief executive, Harald Krüger, said Mr. Trump's auto tariffs "would have an impact on jobs in the United States." In a June letter to the Commerce Department, the company said it might cut investment and production in Spartanburg if selling its American-made sport-utility vehicles abroad became too expensive.

Already this year, BMW stopped exporting the X3 crossover from Spartanburg to China and began making more of the S.U.V.s in plants in Shenyang, China, and Rosslyn, South Africa.

It announced last week that it would increase production capacity to 520,000 vehicles in its two Shenyang plants next year, overtaking the total production in Spartanburg. This week, the Chinese government announced that it would allow BMW to increase its stake in the Shenyang joint venture to 75 percent from 50 percent, making it the first foreign carmaker to own a majority of a manufacturing operation in the country.

Those overseas moves are being watched warily here. "This directly affects us," said A. J. Cempola, a software developer at BMW's Spartanburg plant. "It isn't talk anymore."

Mr. Cempola, 30, said the job helped him pay off his student loans and buy a four-bedroom home with his

wife. Everyone in town, he said, works at BMW or knows someone who does.

"This area has grown a lot from BMW, and it's been great for South Carolina," he said. "And we don't want that to change."

The company insists it's going to produce a new vehicle, the X7, in Spartanburg. But the tariff moves have sent a shiver through the area. If the company decides to make fewer S.U.V.s here, the effects would spread far beyond Mr. Cemproul's paycheck.

A significant chunk of the thousands of parts in an X3 aren't made in Munich — they're manufactured by small and midsize companies across the United States. The door system, for example, comes together at a plant in Duncan, S.C., owned by Brose, a German parts maker that also has factories in Michigan, Illinois and Alabama.

A line of five South Carolinians works with three robots to fit all the pieces of the door system together. The plastic plate came from Baxter, a producer in Westminster, S.C. A supplier in Ohio made the fleece inside. Brose also makes the pair of oblong air gates that give the front of some BMWs their toothy look. It imports the air-gate motor from its plant in the Czech Republic.

Brose didn't want to speculate on the impact of the tariffs. But the Brose plant manager, Michael Morgenroth, said, "If you're smart, you can draw your own conclusion."

Other suppliers that have set up shop in South Carolina have been more direct. ZF Friedrichshafen of Germany, a major producer of transmissions, and Magna of Canada, a giant in seat manufacturing, said in letters to the Commerce Department that the tariffs would directly hit their American workers.

"It's not good what is happening at the moment," said Erwin Doll, the chief executive of Röchling Automotive, a German company that employs 400 people at a plant in Duncan. Röchling makes underbodies of S.U.V.s for BMW, along with plastic systems that make the vehicles more aerodynamic.

"If BMW or Daimler or Nissan or Honda cannot export as many as they like, then obviously it will hurt our turnover as well," Mr. Doll said of the plant's prospective revenue.

The company has plants in many of the places that BMW does around the world, and if the carmaker shifts more production out of Spartanburg, Mr. Doll would probably need to follow suit. "We would have to adjust our cost and think about how we invest," he said.

At the Port of Charleston on Friday, as BMWs cycled out of the docks, trade barriers seemed a distant worry. Workers drove more than 300 gleaming S.U.V.s onto a massive ship that functions like a parking garage

on water, with scheduled stops in England, Belgium and Germany.

In June, the port handled more shipping containers than in any other month in its history — possibly reflecting a surge in shipments timed to avoid new tariffs — and the fiscal year that just ended broke traffic records. But Jim Newsome, chief executive of the South Carolina Ports Authority, warned that if the back-and-forth with Europe on trade escalated, "that would hurt our port."

Workers appear less concerned, for now. "I don't see where we have been affected by the trade war like they've been talking about," said Glenn Jamison, 62, a longshoreman who spends his days checking a video feed of arriving containers to make sure they're sealed and not damaged.

He looks at the count of boxes filled coming into the port and leaving every day, and the numbers keep going up. Ten percent of all of the containers that the port processes are filled with products related to the auto industry.

"We don't see any instability," he said. "We're hearing about it, but we don't see it yet."

Mr. Trump's trade strategy has won him fans on the docks, even though it could hurt some of them.

"American workers have been sold down the river with Nafta and other agreements," said Michael Spellman, who handles the documentation for cargo. He praised Mr. Trump for trying to renegotiate deals that the president sees as unfair, even if that approach costs some jobs in the short term.

"He's doing what he said he would," Mr. Spellman said. "He's keeping promises, instead of lip service like every other politician."

EU Prepares To Retaliate Over Car Tariffs Before Trump Talks

By Viktoria Dendrinou, Alexander Weber

[Bloomberg News](#), July 19, 2018

The European Union is preparing a new list of American goods to hit with protective measures if a mission to Washington next week fails to persuade U.S. President Donald Trump not to raise levies on car imports.

The bloc may target American goods worth about 20 percent of the U.S. action, according to two officials with knowledge of the deliberations. The level of the EU's retaliatory tariffs would probably match the U.S. levels, said the officials, who asked not to be identified because the preparations are private.

"If the U.S. would impose these car tariffs that would be very unfortunate but we are preparing together

with our member states a list of rebalancing measures as well,” EU trade chief Cecilia Malmstrom said on Thursday.

When Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker meets with Trump on July 25, he'll bring two main negotiating proposals in an effort to tamp down the escalating trade tensions: an offer to discuss the reduction of levies on cars and car parts among all major auto-exporting countries in a so-called plurilateral deal; and the possibility of broaching a limited free-trade agreement, according to a separate official with knowledge of the EU's thinking.

The U.S. is in the midst of a probe into whether car imports damage national security, which could trigger the 20 percent tariff on autos that Trump has threatened. Washington has already hit the EU with duties on its steel and aluminum exports using the same national-security justification, which led to European levies on 2.8 billion euros (\$3.3 billion) of American goods.

The U.S. imported about 294 billion euros (\$341 billion) of cars and car parts in 2017, 58 billion euros of that originated in the 28-nation bloc, according to an internal EU memo seen by Bloomberg.

The U.S. expressed optimism that the two sides may come to an agreement, with White House Economic Adviser Larry Kudlow saying on Wednesday that the commission president “is bringing a very important free-trade offer.”

The EU isn't allowed under global rules to reduce its 10 percent tariff on American cars unless it either does so for all WTO members or reaches a bilateral accord with the U.S. that covers “substantially all” two-way trade. A plurilateral deal modeled after the Information Technology Agreement, which abolished tariffs on some IT products traded between its signatories, is allowed under WTO rules.

Plurilateral accords involve a group of like-minded countries that are typically limited to specific sectors of goods or services. The WTO permits these types of negotiations as long as the benefits are provided to all WTO members on a most-favored nation basis. It is faster and less burdensome to negotiate these accords rather than multilateral deals because they don't require the approval of all 164 WTO members.

A plurilateral deal is one of several ideas the commission is considering, according to Malmstrom, who expressed skepticism that such an accord could work. “It's one idea of many,” she said. “I don't know if it would work at all.” “Deescalate the Situation”

“The aim of President Juncker's visit is to try to establish a good relation, try to see how we can deescalate the situation and avoid it from going further

and see if there is a forum where we can discuss these issues,” Malmstrom said in Brussels.

EU member states are divided on the next course of action, according to a separate official. Germany, which shipped 640,000 cars to the U.S. last year, is eager to negotiate a solution with the U.S. administration.

The French are less enthusiastic and consider the new auto tariffs a foregone conclusion, according to another official. They want Juncker to approach the Trump meeting with options, but say now isn't the time to negotiate.

“We now have to avoid escalation,” French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire said in Paris earlier this month. “That is in the hands of the U.S. and Donald Trump. Attacking allies and breaking international laws is not the right way.”

— With assistance by Nikos Chrysoloras

Trump Tried To Protect Qualcomm. Now His Trade War May Be Hurting It.

By Don Clark

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

Steve Mollenkopf, the chief executive of Qualcomm, has been waiting for a phone call with news from China. It has been a long wait.

His company, which makes chips that help mobile phones communicate, has been on extended hold while the Chinese authorities review a deal that Qualcomm struck 20 months ago to buy another chip maker, NXP Semiconductors. Mr. Mollenkopf said Qualcomm had done all it could to persuade Beijing to approve the \$44 billion transaction, which the companies have said will be terminated next Wednesday without regulatory consent.

But both the acquisition and Qualcomm have now become entangled in the trade war raging between the United States and China. China's prolonged review of the deal for NXP is widely seen by analysts and trade experts as part of Beijing's retaliation for President Trump's tariffs on Chinese goods.

“We want to see it get done,” Mr. Mollenkopf, 49, said in an interview at Qualcomm's headquarters in San Diego. When asked if his company was caught in the trade war, he said, “That's probably accurate.”

The situation, which may be a sign of what is to come for other multinationals that also have interests dependent on China, is laced with irony. In March, Mr. Trump moved to protect Qualcomm when his administration blocked a \$117 billion hostile takeover bid for the company by another chip maker, Broadcom. At the time, Mr. Trump said the deal would “impair the national security of the United States” after a

government committee found that Broadcom would most likely reduce vital Qualcomm wireless research to the benefit of Chinese companies.

Now Mr. Trump may end up hurting the company that he sought to shield, in an unintended consequence of the mounting trade hostilities that his administration has spearheaded. Mr. Mollenkopf and others have said buying NXP, a Dutch chip maker, is important to helping Qualcomm move more quickly into technology for cars and other new markets.

A White House spokeswoman did not respond to a request for comment.

Mr. Mollenkopf appeared resigned to Qualcomm's lack of options with China's review. "We can only influence so much," he said.

But the chief executive, a company veteran who took the top job in 2014, also struck an optimistic tone, arguing that Qualcomm can prosper without NXP because "we have a good technology road map."

"That technology road map is going to be valuable regardless of whatever the outcome is with NXP," Mr. Mollenkopf said.

The heart of that road map is 5G, industry shorthand for a next generation of ultrafast global cellular networks that Qualcomm has been helping to develop. Mr. Mollenkopf predicts 5G will take his company beyond its stronghold in smartphones. And since signing the deal for NXP, Qualcomm has made progress on its own in diversifying its business by selling more chips into cars, he added, with its backlog of chip orders from the auto industry recently totaling \$4 billion.

In addition, Mr. Mollenkopf said, if the NXP deal does not go through, Qualcomm plans a stock buyback of \$20 billion to \$30 billion to help lift its stock price.

Stacy Rasgon, an analyst with Sanford Bernstein, said Qualcomm's political stalemate with China and the question of whether the company could integrate NXP effectively had led some investors to prefer a buyback. "People just want certainty, one way or another," he said.

The fallout from the trade war is the latest challenge for Mr. Mollenkopf, who has been on the hot seat for much of his tenure as chief executive. Qualcomm has been hurt by slower sales of smartphones, while an unusual business model that combines patent licensing with chip sales has prompted antitrust squabbles on three continents.

Qualcomm's share price has been largely under pressure since January 2017, when its longtime customer Apple and the Federal Trade Commission filed lawsuits accusing Qualcomm of abusing its market power and patent position to charge unfairly high royalties. The company has rejected the accusations.

And Mr. Mollenkopf faces the possibility that Paul Jacobs, a former chairman of Qualcomm and the son of one of the company's founders, Irwin Jacobs, may mount a bid to take the chip maker private.

More recently, after the Trump administration blocked the Broadcom bid, White House actions have been problematic for Qualcomm. In April, the administration issued an order preventing American companies from selling components to China's ZTE after finding that ZTE violated United States sanctions involving North Korea and Iran. ZTE is a major Qualcomm customer.

Mr. Trump later softened his stance toward ZTE, which agreed to changes. The Commerce Department removed ZTE from a list of proscribed customers on Friday, enabling Qualcomm to resume selling chips to the Chinese company.

It's unclear if China might now relent on NXP, or keep withholding approval of the deal to push back against the Trump administration's trade tariffs. "One weapon is obviously the Qualcomm weapon," said Robert Atkinson, president of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, a think tank.

China's antitrust authority, the State Administration for Market Regulation, did not respond to a faxed request for comment. The country would be the ninth jurisdiction to complete a customary antitrust review of Qualcomm's NXP deal; eight others, including the United States, have approved it.

An NXP spokeswoman referred to recent remarks by Richard Clemmer, the company's chief executive, who said the chip maker continued to believe in the Qualcomm transaction.

Mr. Mollenkopf embarked on the NXP deal nearly two years ago to reduce Qualcomm's dependence on the maturing mobile phone market. While Qualcomm primarily makes mobile chips and earns most of its profit from royalty payments from handset makers, NXP sells more than 14,000 different chips that are widely used in cars, mobile payments and other applications.

The deal, announced in October 2016, seemed ambitious from the start. NXP has nearly as many employees as Qualcomm — about 30,000 — and a tradition of operating factories, which still make some of its products. Qualcomm has always relied on other companies to make the chips it designs.

Regulatory approval was expected to take time, with the companies predicting they would not be able to close the deal until the end of 2017. But the review has dragged on even longer. In Europe and South Korea, where Qualcomm has faced antitrust challenges from regulators, the authorities won concessions to make sure the company would not unfairly exploit patents on a

payment technology called near-field communications it would acquire by buying NXP.

China presented special issues. The country's regulatory authorities have taken an activist stance on antitrust reviews in the past few years. Qualcomm gets more than half of its revenue from the country, but its relations with customers and Beijing have not always been smooth.

China's antitrust authority previously investigated Qualcomm and found in 2015 that its patent-licensing practices violated antimonopoly laws. Qualcomm agreed to pay a settlement of \$975 million.

Mr. Mollenkopf, who rose through Qualcomm's engineering ranks and helped lead chip development efforts, said the company had endured a turbulent period. But one thing is certain, he said: There will be no extension of the NXP deal deadline beyond next Wednesday, when Qualcomm reports quarterly earnings.

"We think NXP is a great deal for us," Mr. Mollenkopf said. "If it doesn't get done, we also have means to create value in different ways."

How Trump's Tariffs Tripped Up Alcoa

By Peter Eavis

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

United States corporations are sending in the first reports from the front lines of President Trump's trade war, and in some cases, investors don't like what they're seeing.

Alcoa, the 130-year-old aluminum producer, said on Wednesday that the Trump administration's aluminum tariffs, imposed at the beginning of June, were adding to its costs. That, in part, prompted the company to lower an earnings forecast. Alcoa's shares slid 13 percent on Thursday.

The company's second-quarter results on Wednesday, as well as comments by Alcoa executives on a conference call, revealed new information about how the steel and aluminum tariffs were hurting the very companies they were intended to protect.

About half of Alcoa's sales are booked in the United States, but a smaller share of its assets are in the country. The Trump administration's tariffs hit Alcoa when it sells aluminum produced in its overseas plants, predominantly those in Canada, to customers in the United States.

On a call on Wednesday to discuss second-quarter earnings, Alcoa's chief financial officer, William F. Oplinger, said the aluminum tariffs, which the Trump administration set at 10 percent, would increase Alcoa's costs as much as \$14 million a month. Alcoa's total hit this year could total around \$100 million.

That's about 12 percent of the \$822 million in pretax profits that Alcoa made in the first half of the year. It's sizable, but not a crippling blow.

But the tariffs also come at a time when other factors are weighing on Alcoa's business.

The company on Wednesday reduced by \$500 million its 2018 forecast for adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization, a profit measure that excludes several expenses. The estimated hit from the tariffs accounts for around 20 percent of that reduction, but the company also blamed the lowered forecast on changes in market prices, higher energy costs and operational issues.

The tariffs have also helped Alcoa and other producers by pushing the overall price of aluminum up in the United States. But it's not clear whether the increase will be sustained. Buyers rushing to purchase aluminum before the tariffs were imposed may have helped drive prices higher.

Proponents of Mr. Trump's tariffs on metals hope they will lead to more production by steel and aluminum producers in the United States. No longer having to compete so fiercely with subsidized foreign producers, American producers may be able to invest more and expand. One way that may happen is if producers fire up dormant operations. But Alcoa's chief executive, Roy C. Harvey, said on Wednesday that, if all inoperative facilities at American producers were revived, the United States would still need to import the "vast majority" of its aluminum needs.

Congress To Toughen Foreign Investment Reviews Amid Trade Fight With China

A new measure will affect both foreign firms seeking deals in the U.S. and American companies doing business abroad

By Kate O'Keeffe And Siobhan Hughes

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Trump Administration To Explore Allowing Drug Imports To Counter Price Hikes

By Laurie McGinley

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

The Trump administration is cracking open the door to using prescription drugs imported from overseas — ones that have not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration — to combat high drug prices in limited circumstances.

The FDA announced on Thursday that it plans to create a working group to examine how to safely import

drugs in a specific situation: when there's a sharp price increase for an off-patent drug produced by a single manufacturer.

In those cases, imports "could help address price hikes and supply disruptions that are harming American patients," Health and Human Services Secretary Azar said in a statement. As an example, he cited the 2015 case of Daraprim, an old drug whose price was famously hiked from \$13.50 to \$750 a pill by Martin Shkreli of Turing Pharmaceuticals.

Rachel Sachs, a professor at the Washington University School of Law, called the idea "a very smart move that would allow the administration to respond to some of the worst actors that we have seen in drug pricing." But she added that such a strategy wouldn't work against the kind of year-over-year price increases that have pushed up the costs of branded drugs — nor is the administration proposing that any possible importation be used that way.

Generally, the importation of drugs from other countries is illegal. But the FDA doesn't enforce the ban against individuals bringing in small amounts of drugs for personal use. And it occasionally allows the importation of foreign-approved drugs into the United States by manufacturers and suppliers to ease supply shortages, such as ones that occurred as a result of the hurricane in Puerto Rico.

FDA commissioner Scott Gottlieb said in a statement that the "access disruptions" caused by sudden price hikes were similar to those that occur during severe shortages. The working group, he said, would examine whether the added competition provided by imports would help patients afford medications until new suppliers emerged in the U.S. market.

The drug industry's main trade group, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, immediately criticized the idea. It said that allowing imports would "circumvent the robust safety requirements we have in United States, posing a serious public health risk and jeopardizing our secure medicine system." It added that the administration instead should continue spurring access to generic medications.

Critics of high drug prices applauded the administration move. Aaron Kesselheim, an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, said he has long supported allowing selected importation to deter "pharmaceutical entrepreneurs" from jacking up the price of older, off-patent medications. "It's a useful step," he said.

Gabriel Levitt, president of PharmacyChecker.com, a company which verifies online pharmacies and lists drug price comparisons, said the announcement was "a step in the right direction toward accepting the fact that

we are very capable of importing lower-cost safe and effective medicines."

The administration's importation announcement is the latest development in the heated debate over drug pricing. On Wednesday, Gottlieb criticized makers of high-priced biologic medications for stalling the release of similar, cheaper versions of the same drugs. And the White House budget office last evening indicated that it is reviewing a proposal to change the way that pharmacy benefit managers — which act as middlemen between pharmaceutical companies and payers — operate.

Also Wednesday, Novartis said it would not raise prices on its medicines in the United States for the rest of the year. And Pfizer recently agreed to defer substantial price increases on more than 40 medicines after its chief executive spoke with President Trump. On Thursday morning, Trump tweeted thanks to Novartis and Pfizer.

Administration officials said the working group will not primarily be examining reimportation, the long-debated idea that refers to importing drugs back to the United States that were manufactured in this country and exported for sale at cheaper prices elsewhere. Instead, it will focus narrowly on importing imported drugs that are approved in other countries and could serve as substitutes for FDA-approved versions.

Broadly allowing overseas drugs into the United States is staunchly opposed by most Republicans; Azar and Gottlieb have both expressed concerns about it. During the presidential campaign, Trump expressed support for the idea, but it wasn't included in the administration's recent proposal to bring down drug prices. Many Democrats are strong supporters of importation.

But even those who oppose high drug prices say that widespread importation is not likely to work as a general strategy to reduce the high prices of brand-name drugs.

If state or federal governments or individuals tried to bring large batches of patented drugs into the United States from another country, the manufacturer could simply restrict sales to that country, whether it was Canada or Mexico or somewhere in Europe. "Pharmaceutical companies could just refuse to play ball and restrict supplies," Sachs said.

A 2003 law allows the importation of drugs from Canada if the Department of Health and Human Services certifies that such a move would not increase safety risks for patients and would generate cost savings for U.S. consumers. So far, no HHS secretary has signed off on those conditions.

White House Morale Tanks Amid Helsinki Fallout

Staffers are considering accelerating their departures in the wake of the president's equivocations on Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

By Eliana Johnson

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

President Donald Trump's disastrous performance since his news conference alongside Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin has sent West Wing morale to its lowest level since the Charlottesville fiasco almost a year ago.

As happened last August, when the president refused to condemn neo-Nazi demonstrators, Trump's attempts to tamp down outrage have backfired. Stilted statements followed by ad-libbed remarks left even his allies feeling that while the president was technically acknowledging a mistake, he actually meant what he'd said on the first go-round — that he believed Putin's denials of Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

"People are just depressed," said one Republican close to the White House. "Nobody wants to take on the public heat of resigning right now, but there are a bunch of people who were thinking maybe they'd leave after the midterms who are very seriously starting to consider accelerating their timetable."

But the president's usual defenders, many of whom have been critical of him in public and almost all of whom are privately disappointed by his performance, say the following: While Trump's statements are regrettable, they have few if any policy consequences. And it's for that reason that senior-level officials like Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser John Bolton — those with the most impact on policy — are unlikely to step down.

Yet, as Charlottesville triggered public soul-searching by Trump's Jewish economic policy adviser Gary Cohn, the spectacle in Helsinki has raised questions of how senior officials who accept that Russia is a serious adversary can continue to work for a president who looks the other way on Putin's attacks.

To Trump's critics, even among his fellow Republicans, both events represent an abdication of moral leadership, a role to which Trump's predecessors aspired even if they fell short.

"Moral leadership is critically important for the president," said Allan Lichtman, presidential historian and the author of the forthcoming book "The Embattled Vote in America." "It sets the tone not only for the nation but for the entire world because the president is the leader of the free world."

Many of the biggest controversies of the Trump presidency have come from such moments of perceived moral equivocation. His speeches have been devoid of references to Reagan's "shining city on a hill" or even to George W. Bush's "axis of evil" — phrases that defined their presidencies but also continued a tradition where presidential leadership involved charting a moral course for the country and the world.

Trump has rejected that tradition from the outset, using his inaugural address to describe "American carnage" and repeatedly undermining the idea of America as a beacon for the world. He refused, for example, in a February 2017 interview with former Fox News Channel host Bill O'Reilly to condemn Russian President Vladimir Putin's suppression of the free press. "There are a lot of killers," Trump said. "You think our country's so innocent?"

Indeed, while a majority of Republicans, Democrats and independents say it is important for the president to provide moral leadership, according to a Gallup poll released in May, 22 percent of Republicans and 90 percent of Democrats say Trump provides somewhat or very weak moral leadership.

"You cannot understate the importance of these moral moments, going back to Lincoln's Second Inaugural," Lichtman said. "We are still inspired by Lincoln's words. Is anyone inspired by anything Donald Trump has ever said, ever?"

Trump's attempt to rewrite the script on Russia this week has reignited some of those concerns. The president departed from written remarks intended to clarify his comments at the Helsinki news conference with Putin where he gave equal weight to the findings of the American intelligence community that Russia meddled in the 2016 election and to Putin's denial of that fact.

After acknowledging Russia's culpability, Trump added, "Could be other people also, there's a lot of people out there."

Last summer, days after sparking a media conflagration for condemning people on "both sides" of the rally in Charlottesville, the president emerged at Trump Tower for a press conference ostensibly intended to tout his infrastructure agenda and declared, "You had some very bad people in that group, but you also had people that were very fine people, on both sides."

Behind him, his newly appointed chief of staff, John Kelly, could be seen rubbing his temples with a look of misery that ping-ponged across the Internet. Cohn, then Trump's chief economic adviser, drafted a resignation letter. But not a single member of the White House staff resigned over it — though Cohn eventually left, amid a fight over tariffs.

Monday's events have sparked renewed demands for resignations-en-masse from presidential aides.

"Assuming Mike Pompeo and John Bolton still have their own senses intact, they ... should resign following the epic disgrace of the U.S.-Russia summit in Helsinki on Monday. So should their senior staff," wrote New York Times columnist Bret Stephens on Thursday, noting that he knows and respects both men.

But others have called for those already inside to stay. "Please don't resign," wrote Kori Schake, head of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, in the Atlantic. "We should not want the moral satisfaction and practical devastation of clearing out people of conscience and allow the president to replace them with more malleable or compromised people."

Republicans Withdraw 9th Circuit Nominee Amid Criticism Over His College Writings

By Sarah D. Wire

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 19, 2018

Senate Republican leaders on Thursday abruptly withdrew the nomination of Ryan Bounds for the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, a reminder of how a single GOP senator's objection can derail a judicial confirmation when all Democrats unite against it.

It was a rare setback in President Trump's otherwise impressive record of appointing judges to the federal bench.

And it comes as Republicans are embarking on an effort to confirm Trump's nomination to the Supreme Court open, Judge Brett Kavanaugh, amid growing Democratic opposition.

The nomination of Bounds, 45, currently an assistant U.S. attorney for the District of Oregon, appeared to be headed for confirmation earlier in the day, despite the objections of both of Oregon's Democratic senators.

But Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.), the Senate's only African American Republican, said he had reservations about some of Bounds' college writings, which dealt with racial divisions on campus.

Alliance for Justice, a liberal legal advocacy group, said Bounds used "racist and offensive language" in writings while at Stanford University.

"Ryan Bounds is the author of offensive material about people of color, rape survivors, LGBTQ people and others – material he hid from Oregon's judicial selection commission in an attempt to evade thorough vetting," the group said Thursday.

The White House and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky chose to pull the

nomination rather than have it fail, Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn of Texas said.

It was the first time President Trump has been forced to withdraw a nomination to an appellate court, though several nominations to district courts have been withdrawn amid questions about experience or bias.

Republicans hold a slim 51-seat majority in the Senate, and with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) absent while he battles brain cancer at home, they can't afford to lose any GOP members, assuming Democrats all vote against a nominee.

Senate GOP Withdraws Judicial Nominee Ryan Bounds, Delivering A Blow To Trump's Court Plans

By Karoun Demirjian And Seung Min Kim

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

The GOP's bid to transform the federal bench with conservative judges hit its first significant snag Thursday, after Senate Republicans were forced to withdraw the nomination of Ryan Bounds, Trump's pick to serve on the powerful 9th Circuit appeals court.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) announced he would withdraw Bounds's nomination after the vote to confirm him was delayed for nearly an hour, prompting speculation that the GOP did not have support it needed to carry Bounds' nomination.

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) told reporters Thursday that the decision was made with the White House, following concerns Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) raised about the nomination.

"Senator Scott raised some concerns yesterday about the nomination and I think it became apparent the nominee was not going to prevail," Cornyn told reporters after Bounds' vote was withdrawn. "The White House decided under the circumstances to withdraw the nomination and so that's where we are."

A spokesman for Scott confirmed that Scott had concerns about some of Bounds's writings, while another Republican aide concurred that Scott had expressed problems with Bounds's nomination.

Democrats opposed Bounds's controversial nomination, bringing up articles he had written in the Stanford Review while in law school that criticized and ridiculed multiculturalism and groups concerned with racial issues.

Bounds apologize for those writings earlier this year, but senators continued to bring them up.

Republicans could not afford to lose any potential votes for Bounds's confirmation, as the Senate is split between 51 Republicans and 49 Democrats. Only 50 Republicans are able to vote now because Sen. John

McCain (R-Ariz.) is absent while he receives treatment for a serious form of brain cancer.

White House Pulls Circuit Court Nominee At Last Minute

By Roll Call Staff

[CQ Roll Call \(DC\)](#), July 19, 2018

Facing imminent defeat even in a Republican-controlled Senate, the White House on Thursday withdrew the nomination of Ryan Wesley Bounds to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit, an abrupt turn of events just moments before the chamber was set to vote on confirmation of the judge.

The late-breaking issue appeared to be writings that came to light and turned the tide against him with some Republicans.

"There were some writings from when he was a student at Stanford that were maybe not racially sensitive. They weren't racist but there is some concern that the issue could have been handled with more sensitivity," Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., said.

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., the only black Republican in the chambers, had planned to vote against the Bounds nomination. "Sen. Scott needed more time to talk to people who knew him and that's not available. Sen. Scott said he couldn't vote for him today if the vote was now. I support him in that decision," Rubio said.

Scott said he spoke to Bounds in person on Thursday. "I think everybody just does their own due diligence. Unfortunately, I'm not on the Judiciary Committee so mine started later than others," Scott said.

"There were some objections raised by Sen. Scott that couldn't be resolved in the short time we had, so the White House decided to withdraw the nomination rather than have the nominee lose," Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn, R-Texas, said.

Trump Judicial Nominee Pulled Over Racially-charged Writings

By Burgess Everett

[Politico](#), July 19, 2018

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) pulled the nomination of Ryan Bounds to serve on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals from the Senate floor after it became clear Thursday that a number of Republicans would oppose him over racially-charged writings in Bounds's record.

The move came after Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) on Thursday morning flagged Bounds's past commentary with Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.). The Florida senator then reviewed the record of Bounds, who was nominated by

President Donald Trump. Rubio, who had grown close to Scott during his 2016 White House campaign, soon after sided with Scott against the nomination, according to a person familiar the matter.

In the following hours a number of other Republicans pledged to sink what would have been Trump's twenty-fourth Circuit Court nominee. It became clear that the nomination was in trouble as the vote was delayed nearly an hour while Senate Republicans debated what to do about the doomed nomination.

McConnell then pulled the nomination from the Senate floor and said the nomination would be withdrawn.

As an undergraduate at Stanford, Bounds, now 45, had lamented organizations on campus that "divide up by race for their feel-good ethnic hoedowns" and called for those groups to be discontinued, among other racially charged remarks, according to a report from the Alliance for Justice. Those remarks were enough to turn off all 49 Senate Democrats, even the most conservative ones up for reelection this fall. All voted to block Bounds on Wednesday.

All 50 Republicans in attendance voted to advance the Bounds nomination on Wednesday, but after Rubio and Scott pledged to vote against the nominee's final confirmation vote on Thursday, there was no way for the nomination to pass the Senate. Rather than hold a failed vote and put his members on the record on Bounds, the nomination was pulled from the floor.

"The nominee misled the committee and because the writings were of deep concern, the individual was not qualified to serve on the bench," said Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.).

Merkley and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) said they spoke to Republicans about their concerns about Bounds.

Bounds's failed nomination marks the second defeat of a high-profile Trump nominee this year. Veterans Affairs nominee Ronny Jackson withdrew his nomination after Democrats released damaging information about his work record in the White House.

McConnell Withdraws Trump Judicial Pick Minutes Before Vote

By Kevin Freking

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

In a stunning move, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has withdrawn one of President Donald Trump's judicial nominees just minutes before he was set for a confirmation vote.

McConnell announced Thursday on the Senate floor that he was pulling the nomination of Ryan Bounds.

Trump had nominated the assistant U.S. attorney in Oregon to be a judge on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The withdrawal of the nomination is a blow to the White House. Judicial nominations are rarely pulled back at such a late stage in the process unless a nominee does not have the support to pass.

Republicans have been able to use their thin majority to push several of the president's nominees through despite overwhelming Democratic opposition. Sen. John McCain's absence due to his battle with brain cancer has given the GOP even less cushion, with Republicans holding a 50-49 voting edge.

That cushion evaporated when Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina said he needed more information about Bounds.

"After talking with the nominee last night and meeting with him today, I had unanswered questions that led to me being unable to support him," Scott said.

The two senators from Bounds' home state, Democratic Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, had both objected to his nomination, saying they were not consulted by the Trump administration before the choice. They highlighted writings from Bounds' years at Stanford University that they said revealed alarming views on race, the rights of workers and the gay community.

The Senate gives lawmakers a chance to weigh in on a judicial nominee from their home state by submitting a blue-colored form called the "blue slip." A positive blue slip signals the Senate can move forward with the nomination process. The blue slip courtesy is designed to generate consultation between the executive branch and Congress. The two Oregon senators signaled their objections by returning a negative blue slip, which in the past has generally stalled a nomination.

This time, Republicans opted to move forward anyway, which meant that if Bounds had been confirmed, it would have been the first time since at least 1956 that a nominee had been confirmed with both home state senators returning negative blue slips.

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Senators Dismiss Trump's Judicial Nominee For 9th Circuit

By Alex Swoyer

[Washington Times](#), July 19, 2018

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell withdrew one of President Trump's judicial nominees for the 9th

U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Thursday after failing to get the majority of the Senate to back the president's pick.

Ryan W. Bounds, an assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon, faced pushback from both of his home state senators, who said the nominee withheld controversial writings when he was being vetted for the federal bench.

One of his home state senators said Mr. Bounds defended vandalizing a gay-pride monument, argued against measures to protect sexual assault survivors and compared campus groups promoting multiculturalism in America to Nazis while writing for his college newspaper.

"Mr. Bounds misrepresented — in my view really lied — as he covered up disturbing intolerant writings from his past," said Sen. Ron Wyden, Oregon Democrat.

The writings were discovered after Oregon's bipartisan committee, which handles judicial nominees, vetted Mr. Bounds.

But Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley, Iowa Republican, said Mr. Bounds' college writings from 25 years ago should not be a reason to reject him, criticizing both Mr. Wyden and Sen. Jeff Merkley, Oregon's other senator, for refusing to meet with the nominee during the confirmation process.

"Interestingly, none of them cite anything Mr. Bounds has done in his legal career as a reason for opposing his nomination," Mr. Grassley said.

With the Republican's slim 51 to 49 majority and Sen. John McCain, Arizona Republican out due to his illness, the GOP faced pushback from at least one of its senators, Tim Scott of South Carolina, on Mr. Bounds' nomination.

"After talking with the nominee last night and meeting with him today, I had unanswered questions that led to me being unable to support him," Mr. Scott said.

The top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California was surprised when the nomination was withdrawn moments before the scheduled confirmation vote.

"These are hard things, you know, you learn things as you go along in the process and sometimes it changes, and I think that's one of those," she said as she left the chamber floor.

White House Withdraws Appeals Court Nominee Who Deplored Multiculturalism

By Thomas Kaplan

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

The sprint by President Trump and Senate Republicans to install conservative judges to the nation's courts hit an unexpected speed bump on Thursday after

a nominee for a key federal appeals court was pulled to avoid an embarrassing defeat on the Senate floor.

The nomination of Ryan W. Bounds to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit faced opposition over his writings in college, which included a column in which he railed against “race-focused groups” on campus and “race-think.”

The Senate’s only black Republican, Tim Scott of South Carolina, had concerns about those writings and Mr. Bounds’s inability to clarify how his thinking had changed since then, according to a Senate Republican aide.

“After talking with the nominee last night and meeting with him today, I had unanswered questions that led to me being unable to support him,” Mr. Scott said in a statement.

Republican leaders have no room for error when the Democratic caucus is united in opposition, given that the party has only a 51-to-49 majority, and one Republican senator, John McCain of Arizona, has been absent while battling brain cancer.

At least one other Republican, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, agreed to join Mr. Scott in opposition to Mr. Bounds’s nomination, according to another Republican aide.

“Tim Scott raised some concerns, and this was new information to most people,” said Senator John Cornyn of Texas, the No. 2 Senate Republican, who said that the White House decided to withdraw Mr. Bounds’s nomination rather than have it fail.

Adding conservative judges to the Ninth Circuit, which covers much of the West and has a liberal reputation, has been a longtime priority of Republicans. But Mr. Bounds, a federal prosecutor in Oregon, had faced strenuous opposition from Oregon’s senators, Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, both Democrats.

Senate Republicans moved ahead with the nomination over their objections, generating howls of protest from Democrats, who accused the majority party of running roughshod over the Senate’s tradition of deference to home-state senators.

By custom, home-state senators use a blue-tinted form, known as a blue slip, to signify whether they are on board with a judicial nominee from their state, although the weight carried by blue slips has varied over the years.

“Today, the Senate came to its senses with respect to judges,” Mr. Wyden said, complaining that the White House had “trampled on the whole idea of advise and consent.”

Senate Republicans have had striking success at pushing through conservative judicial nominees, a major

priority of the majority leader, Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky.

The collapse of Mr. Bounds’s nomination came as the Senate is preparing to consider a much higher-profile nominee: Brett M. Kavanaugh, the president’s choice to replace Justice Anthony M. Kennedy on the Supreme Court.

Senator Dianne Feinstein of California, the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, said on Wednesday that the panel “needs access to all documents from his time at the White House and as a political operative.” She estimated that there would be at least a million pages of documents.

Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader, quickly tried to use the fate of Mr. Bounds’s nomination to strengthen the argument that Judge Kavanaugh’s records from the years he spent in George W. Bush’s White House are a necessary part of vetting his nomination.

“They just dumped him on his college writings,” Mr. Schumer said. “It’s going to be hard to argue that Kavanaugh’s writings in the White House are not relevant.”

Controversial Trump Judicial Nominee Withdraws

By Jordain Carney And Alexander Bolton

[The Hill](#), July 19, 2018

One of President Trump’s controversial circuit court nominees has withdrawn his nomination shortly before an expected vote in the Senate on Thursday.

“The nomination will be withdrawn,” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said in announcing his decision to cancel the vote.

Ryan Bounds’s appointment to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals appeared to be in trouble on Thursday afternoon as the Senate delayed holding a vote on his nomination even after he overcame a procedural vote the previous day.

A final vote was expected to start at 1:45 p.m., but instead McConnell came to the Senate floor around 2:30 p.m. to say that the vote had been called off.

If Republicans had pushed forward with the vote, Bounds’s nomination would have failed after Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.), the lone Republican African-American senator, told leadership that he could not vote for Bounds’s nomination on Thursday.

Republicans hold a slim 51-49 majority in the Senate. With Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) absent as undergoes treatment for brain cancer, McConnell would have needed the support of every GOP senator to

confirm Bounds. No Democrat was expected to support his nomination.

Scott declined to say why he wouldn't support Bounds if his nomination had received a vote on Thursday. But he emphasized that he needed more time and more information from the nominee.

"I was taking my time to go through all of the material," he told reporters. "The information I had was insufficient for me to be a 'yes' vote."

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) told reporters that Scott had said he could not support Bounds's nomination if the Senate was going to hold a final vote on Thursday.

"There was some objections raised ... that couldn't be resolved in the short time we had," Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) told reporters, adding that the White House decided to withdraw Bounds's nomination instead.

But a Republican senator familiar with the matter said that Scott notified GOP leaders that he wanted more time to review Bounds racially insensitive remarks and to have a chance to speak to people who knew him personally.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) confirmed that he understood Scott objected to the nominee because of racially insensitive comments in the past, but had not spoken to Scott directly.

Grassley, however, said that Republicans on the Judiciary Committee had discussed the issue thoroughly with Bounds and had satisfied their own concerns.

"He didn't know that was thoroughly discussed with the nominee in our committee," Grassley said of Scott's participation in the vetting.

Scott declined to say if Bounds's previous writings were why he could not support Trump's nominee on Thursday. He also declined to say when he found out about the writings.

Scott is not a member of the Judiciary Committee, which is responsible for vetting judicial nominations and which advanced Bounds's nomination on a party-line vote.

He said he began voicing his concerns to leadership on Wednesday and talked to Bounds on Thursday. He separately spoke at a closed-door lunch on Thursday to tell his colleagues he needed more information before he could vote to confirm Bounds.

Rubio, leaving the closed-door lunch, told reporters that he supported Scott's move, though Scott didn't urge other GOP senators to back the decision.

"I had not tried to convince anybody to do anything. I just shared my thoughts, and others said they were willing to join and ask for more information so we could have a better picture," Scott added.

Bounds's nomination had been under fire from progressives and allied outside groups because of decades-old writings that voiced skepticism about race-focused groups and questioned the need for diversity training.

In one writing, Bounds questioned the strategies used by "more strident racial factions of the student body."

"I am mystified because these tactics seem always to contribute more to restricting consciousness, aggravating intolerance and pigeonholing cultural identities than many a Nazi bookburning," he wrote.

In another article he compared diversity training to a "pestilence."

Bounds apologized for the writings during his confirmation hearing, saying he used "overheated" language.

"I share the concerns of many that the rhetoric I used in debating campus politics back in the early '90s on Stanford's campus was often overheated, overbroad," he said during his hearing.

Scott's objection strikes a blow to the frantic pace Republicans have set as they've confirmed nominees to the circuit court.

Republicans view judicial nominations as their best shot at having a decades-long impact, arguing Democrats will work to undo key legislation when they retake the congressional majority.

Bounds, if he had been confirmed, would have been Trump's 24th appeals court nominee approved by the Senate.

Republicans broke the record set under President George H.W. Bush for the number of appellate judges confirmed during an administration's first two years, giving Trump his 23rd appeals judge on Wednesday.

But Democrats seized on Bounds because, they said, he would have been the first circuit court nomination confirmed when both home-state senators refused to return their "blue slip."

The "blue-slip" rule — a precedent upheld by Senate tradition — has historically allowed a home-state senator to stop a lower-court nominee by refusing to return a sheet of paper, known as a blue slip, to the Judiciary Committee.

But how strictly the precedent is upheld is decided by the Judiciary Committee chairman — in this case, Grassley — and enforcement has varied over the years.

Both Democratic Sens. Jeff Merkley (Ore.) and Ron Wyden (Ore.) announced last year that they would not return their blue slips for Bounds, who they argued misled their selection committee by concealing his controversial writings.

"His nomination has already strained and degraded the Senate's blue-slip tradition as our colleagues rush to pack our courts with extremist judges to advance that vision. ... No judge until now — 101 years later — has ever been confirmed by this body having not received a single blue slip from a home state senator," Merkley said from the Senate floor earlier this week.

Senate Republicans previously confirmed Michael Brennan to serve on the 7th Circuit and David Stras to serve on the 8th Circuit.

But, unlike Bounds, in both of those cases only one home-state senator — Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) and then-Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) — refused to return their blue slip.

Mitch McConnell Pulls Vote On Trump Judicial Pick Ryan Bounds, Declares Nomination Dead

By Naomi Lim

[Washington Examiner](#), July 19, 2018

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., on Thursday pulled a vote for President Trump's pick for a federal appeals court judgeship just before it was due to be held after a number of GOP senators expressed concerns about racially insensitive statements his nominee, U.S. Attorney for Oregon Ryan Bounds, had made while at college.

"For the information of all senators, the nomination will be withdrawn," McConnell said during a floor speech.

.@Senatemajldr on nomination of Assistant U.S. Attorney for Oregon Ryan Bounds to be U.S. Circuit Judge for Ninth Circuit: "For the information of all Senators, the nomination will be withdrawn."

Bounds was named in September as Trump's choice for an open spot on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which is based in San Francisco. It would have been Trump's 24th appellate judge.

Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, confirmed that it was Trump who withdraw the nomination. "The president withdrew it and the president's got the authority to do that," Grassley said. After noting a "very transparent" vetting process, Grassley added that he "can't be surprised" that the nomination was pulled at the last minute. "I've had two — after after we've voted on in committee — I've had two district judges withdrawn. I can't be surprised, I've done that myself."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer's office said the development concerning Bounds' college writings did not bode well for Trump's U.S. Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh, who has also come

under scrutiny for arguments he made over the course of his legal career.

"A lower court nominee's college writings are relevant but a Supreme Court nominee's White House writings aren't? I don't think so," Schumer's office said in a statement.

Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., the only black Republican in the Senate, was among the dissenters. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., also voiced his opposition.

According to the Alliance for Justice, a liberal judiciary advocacy group, Bounds criticized multicultural organizations on campus.

One of Trump's nominees for the circuit court, Ryan Bounds, was just withdrawn just before the Full Senate vote after @SenatorTimScott objected to some of Bounds' college writings regard race (see screenshot). @marcorubio joined Scott in his opposition, thus nom was going down. pic.twitter.com/tZPcinf18E— Frank Thorp V (@frankthorp) July 19, 2018

Bounds attended Stanford University before enrolling at Yale Law School.

A Senate Judicial Miss

Scott and Rubio defeat a good nominee and Democrats crow.

By The Editorial Board

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 19, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Trump Promised To Remake The Courts. He's Installing Conservative Judges At A Record Pace.

By Deanna Paul

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

President Trump's second year in office is proving to be his most successful yet in seeing through his promise to remake the federal judiciary.

With the confirmation of Andrew Oldham, 39, on Wednesday, the Trump administration has successfully pushed through the Senate the largest number of federal judges than any recent president in his first two years. The appointments are expected to help Trump pack federal courts with conservatives who will hear cases on hot-button topics such as abortion and LGBT rights, race-based affirmative action and immigration restrictions, significantly increasing the stakes of each judicial placement.

Media attention has largely focused on Trump's Supreme Court appointments, but he came into the presidency with an uncommon number of vacancies for judges to federal appeals courts, who receive lifetime

appointments. Confirmation of President Barack Obama's picks frequently failed after Republicans took control of the Senate in 2015.

So far, Trump has confirmed 23 judges. Though most have replaced Republican appointees, it is still a sizable number of the 179 judgeship vacancies.

Bill Clinton had 19 judges confirmed by the end of his second year in office, George W. Bush had 17 confirmed and Obama had 16, according to the Houston Chronicle.

Ronald Reagan, who also installed 19 judges before his second year ended, completed two terms in office having filled one seventh of the entire federal bench. Reagan's legacy far outlasted his presidency and led to legal superstars like Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, Chief Judge of the 7th Circuit Frank Easterbrook and D.C. Circuit Judge Douglas Ginsburg.

The administration's efforts experienced a hiccup Thursday when the White House withdrew the nomination of Ryan Bounds for the liberal U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit who had faced widespread criticism over failing to tell the judicial review committee about articles he wrote in the Stanford Review where he ridiculed multiculturalism, The Post's Karoun Demirjian reported.

[White House withdraws judicial nominee Ryan Bounds, after GOP realizes he didn't have votes for confirmation]

Still, conservative groups said the Republicans have been largely victorious.

"President Trump and [Senate Majority] Leader [Mitch] McConnell have accomplished this in the face of unprecedented head wind of Democratic opposition," said Carrie Severino, chief counsel and policy director of the Judicial Crisis Network, a conservative political campaign organization.

Oldham, a staunch conservative jurist, was confirmed by the Senate Wednesday as a 5th Circuit court judge by a very tight margin of 50-49.

Oldham's confirmation precedes what promises to be a contentious U.S. Supreme Court confirmation hearing for D.C. circuit judge Brett Kavanaugh. Oldham, Trump's third Texas appointee, will replace the Reagan-and Bush-appointed Edward Prado. Trump created the vacancy with Prado's recent nomination as the U.S. ambassador to Argentina.

Historically, senators hailing from the state a federal judiciary nominee resides in may submit opinions, known as 'blue slips,' or choose not to return one.

Under Obama, Republicans used the blue slip prerogative to veto nominees, according to Russell Wheeler, visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution's

Governance Studies Program. Trump, Wheeler said, is paying no attention to the home-state democratic senators' opinions.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa) did not immediately return a request for comment.

Trump has managed to push through judicial picks at a record pace because of a Republican-controlled Senate and changes in congressional rules, which now allow a simple majority for confirmation of judges instead of the 60 votes required earlier.

Trump's year-two tally is still likely to grow.

Up next for committee consideration are two antiabortion jurists, David Porter, 52, and Britt Grant, 40. Grant, a former law clerk to Kavanaugh, was nominated by Trump to the judiciary in the last year. She is also one of nine recent Trump judicial nominees to be included on the president's Supreme Court shortlist.

Mueller Reportedly Grants Tony Podesta Immunity To Testify Against Paul Manafort

By Victor Morton

[Washington Times](#), July 19, 2018

Special counsel Robert Mueller has reportedly given a key Democratic operative immunity to testify against former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort.

According to Tucker Carlson, speaking Thursday evening on his Fox News program, Mr. Mueller has offered immunity to Tony Podesta, founder of the Podesta Group and brother of former Hillary Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta.

Mr. Carlson cited "two sources" whom he did not name.

Both Mr. Manafort and the Podesta Group worked on a campaign named the European Centre for a Modern Ukraine, and most of the charges against Mr. Manafort relate to his work there and whether he laundered money for Russian oligarchs, worked as a foreign agent, disclosed his income and status, and related issues.

Mr. Carlson also complained of a political double standard, repeating a claim he had made last October that Tony Podesta and the Podesta Group had committed at least some of those same offenses, such as not registering as foreign agents.

Laws about lobbying and foreign agency "must be enforced equally or they are not laws at all, but political cudgels," Mr. Carlson said.

Mr. Podesta's attorneys issued a cease-and-desist letter against Mr. Carlson back in October, calling several segments done on the group false and demanding that Fox remove all Mr. Carlson's reporting on it. The law firm

also demanded that he not reveal the existence of the letter.

Mr. Carlson gleefully read the letter on-air at the time and all the relevant segments are still on the Fox News site nine months later.

Special Counsel Has Nearly 500 Pieces Of Evidence For Paul Manafort Trial

By Rachel Weiner

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

Pictures of Paul Manafort's homes, cars, \$21,000 watch and high-end clothing may be displayed for jurors at his trial beginning in Alexandria federal court next week, according to a list of nearly 500 potential exhibits published by prosecutors on Wednesday.

The court filing offers a look at the types of evidence the special counsel investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election may use against Manafort, who is accused of bank and tax fraud.

There will be photographs of the putting green at his home in the Hamptons, the clothes he bought from bespoke suitmakers Alan Couture and House of Bijan, and his \$21,000 titanium Bijan watch. There will be records of the hundreds of thousands of dollars he spent at a rug store in Old Town Alexandria and his season tickets to the New York Yankees.

There will also be email communication between Manafort, President Trump's former campaign chairman, and Tad Devine, a Democratic consultant who worked for the same Ukrainian politician.

It is the work Manafort did for Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and his political party that is at the center of the criminal charges against him in both Alexandria and D.C. federal court.

Other exhibits will show Manafort's communications with Rinat Akhmetov, a Ukrainian oligarch who backed Yanukovich, and Serhiy Lovochkin, a Yanukovich ally who serves in the country's parliament.

Manafort is accused of hiding the money he made in Ukraine to avoid paying taxes and then lying about his debt to get new loans.

Some of the proposed exhibits are emails regarding Manafort's real estate investments with his former son-in-law, Jeffrey Yohai.

Manafort is being held at the Alexandria Detention Center. His trial is set to begin Wednesday.

In Washington, Manafort is accused of failing to register as a foreign agent. He has said that his work on behalf of Yanukovich and his allies was focused on Europe. But one item listed as a potential exhibit is an April 2010 memo from Manafort to Yanukovich is

entitled "Goals of US Trip." Another from 2013 is called "US Government Activity."

Justice Department Watchdog Briefs Lawmakers On FBI Bias Inquiry

By Billy House

[Bloomberg News](#), July 19, 2018

A closed-door meeting with the Justice Department's internal watchdog Thursday sparked sharply different takes from House Republicans and Democrats on whether there's much the public doesn't know about government investigative actions during the 2016 presidential campaign.

"It confirmed a lot of the things we suspected," said Representative Jim Jordan of Ohio, a Republican on the Judiciary Committee, who declined to provide details on the meeting with Inspector General Michael Horowitz.

Jordan has been among leaders of his party alleging that bias and mishandling by the government tainted the probes of Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server and of Russian election interference.

Democrats who attended the briefing had a different take-away.

"I walked away with a feeling there was nothing that changed the ultimate conclusions of the Inspector General," said Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi of Illinois, a member of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

In his June 14 report, Horowitz's office found there was anti-Donald Trump sentiment by some within the FBI during the Clinton investigation and that "the conduct by these employees cast a cloud over the entire FBI investigation."

But he also said "we did not find documentary or testimonial evidence that improper considerations, including political bias, directly affected the specific investigative actions we reviewed."

After Flint Debacle, EPA Must Strengthen Oversight Of State Drinking Water Programs, Watchdog Says

By Brady Dennis

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

The Environmental Protection Agency must strengthen its oversight of state drinking water programs to avoid a repeat of what happened in Flint, Mich., an agency watchdog said in a report Thursday. Sluggish federal reaction meant residents were exposed to lead-tainted water for far too long.

"While oversight authority is vital, its absence can contribute to a catastrophic situation," EPA Inspector General Arthur A. Elkins said in releasing the findings,

which stated that “while Flint residents were being exposed to lead in drinking water, the federal response was delayed, in part, because the EPA did not establish clear roles and responsibilities, risk assessment procedures, effective communication and proactive oversight tools.”

The EPA was not alone in its failure to address the crisis that crippled a city of nearly 100,000 residents, including exposing thousands of young children to lead. In particular, state officials failed to implement proper treatments after Flint switched drinking water sources in early 2014, and for months ignored warnings from local residents about the deteriorating water quality.

But the EPA’s inspector general found that the federal government deserved significant blame for not more quickly using its enforcement authority to make sure that state and local officials were complying with the Safe Drinking Water Act, as well as with federal rules that mandate testing for lead.

“EPA needs to learn from Flint and this report,” said Mona Hanna-Attisha, the Flint pediatrician whose research in late 2015 first documented dangerously high lead levels in children’s blood. “All of the EPA lead standards are grossly inadequate and need to be updated to respect the science of ‘no safe level’ of lead exposure. Only then will we as a nation be able to fully protect the potential of our children from this preventable neurotoxin.”

In particular, the report found that the EPA’s Region 5 office, which oversaw Michigan, “did not manage its drinking water oversight program in a way that facilitated effective oversight and timely intervention,” and that staffers in the region “lacked a sense of urgency.”

In one notable failure, an EPA scientist Miguel Del Toral drafted a report in June 2015 “that outlined concerns about lead in Flint’s drinking water and the lack of corrosion control treatment. This report indicated the potential for serious human health risks and recommended potential EPA actions.” Even then, the agency’s inspector general found, months passed before the EPA took action to address the growing crisis.

In Thursday’s report, the EPA’s inspector general offered nine recommendations, including putting in place controls to make sure states and localities are complying with lead testing regulations and properly treating water sources. He also urged the EPA to revise and improve the much-criticized Lead and Copper Rule, which dictates how communities monitor for lead in drinking water. An overhaul of that rule has been underway for years, and the EPA has said it expects to unveil an updated version in 2019.

“EPA has closely reviewed the findings in the Inspector General’s April 2018 draft report and agrees with their recommendations,” agency spokeswoman Enesta Jones said in an email Thursday, adding that officials “have already taken steps to implement several of those recommendations and will continue to expeditiously adopt the rest ... the agency is actively engaging with states to improve communications and compliance with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act to safeguard human health.”

For decades, Flint paid Detroit to have its water piped in from Lake Huron, with anti-corrosion chemicals added along the way. But in early 2014, with the city under the control of a state-appointed emergency manager, officials switched to Flint River water in an ill-fated effort to save money.

State officials failed to ensure proper corrosion-control treatment of the new water source. That failure allowed rust, iron and lead to leach from aging pipes and wind up in residents’ homes. The ensuing catastrophe exposed thousands of children to high levels of lead, which can cause long-term physical damage and mental impairment.

The crisis also obliterated residents’ trust in government. For more than a year, residents and local activists complained of problems with the water, insisting it was causing rashes and other health problems. Those red flags were largely ignored. Only later, after Hanna-Attisha detailed skyrocketing blood lead levels in some local children and reporters continued to publicize the problems with the water, did governments begin to take more aggressive action.

The EPA eventually used its emergency powers to demand action by the state and city. Its regional leader resigned — as the state’s water quality director had done just weeks before. The National Guard handed out bottled water and water filters were distributed.

State and federal investigations began. The Michigan governor faced calls to resign, even as he apologized for the crisis, telling Flint residents in one State of the State address that “government failed you at the federal, state and local level.”

“People have realized they’ve been lied to, and EPA knew about this, and the state knew about this,” Virginia Tech engineering professor Marc Edwards, a national authority on municipal water quality whose tests exposed the extent of Flint’s lead contamination, told the Post in early 2016. “What you really have as it spun out of control is a total loss of trust in government, which failed [residents] miserably. They don’t believe a word that anyone tells them.”

Since a task force began probing the debacle in early 2016, Michigan’s attorney general has filed scores

of criminal charges against more than a dozen state and local officials — many of whom now face multiple felonies — as well as civil suits against outside companies that worked with the Flint water system.

While much of the attention in Flint has focused on the lead-tainted water that exposed thousands of young children to potential long-term health risks, the crisis also has been linked to an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease that contributed to at least a dozen deaths. Those cases ultimately led to the charges Wednesday for the state's top health officials, as well as for the its chief medical executive.

North Korea Denuclearization In A Year Not Likely: U.S. Intelligence Chief

By Reuters Staff

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

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U.S. Accuses North Korea Of U.N. Sanctions Breach, Demands End To Fuel Sales

[Reuters](#), July 18, 2018

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UN Diplomats: Russia Puts 'hold' On US Requests Over NKorea

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

UNITED NATIONS — Diplomats say Russia has asked for additional time to investigate U.S. allegations that North Korea is smuggling refined petroleum products into the country beyond the quota of 500,000 barrels per year allowed under U.N. sanctions.

Last week, the U.S. asked the Security Council committee monitoring sanctions against North Korea to send a letter to U.N. member states and the general public saying that North Korea breached the quota. It also asked the committee to prevent ship-to-ship transfers of petroleum products.

The 14 other council members had until noon EDT on Thursday to object, and two diplomats said Russia put "a hold" on the U.S. requests. One diplomat said Russia asked for six more months, and China supported the "hold."

The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity because council communications are private.

U.S. documents sent to the sanctions committee and obtained by The Associated Press cite 89 instances

between Jan. 1 and May 30 in which North Korean tankers likely delivered refined products "illicitly procured" via ship-to-ship transfers.

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U.S. Rebuffed At U.N. On North Korea Sanctions Enforcement

By Rick Gladstone

[New York Times](#), July 19, 2018

Signaling new tensions over North Korea at the United Nations, Russia and China on Thursday blocked disciplinary steps sought by the United States to stop what it called rampant cheating on North Korea's petroleum imports.

United Nations diplomats said the Russians and Chinese used their power to delay action on an American complaint to a Security Council sanctions panel that accused the North Koreans of importing up to triple the amount of refined petroleum allowed this year.

The petroleum limit is an important component of a severe regimen of sanctions imposed by the 15-member Security Council over North Korea's illicit nuclear and missile tests.

The American complaint was filed last week, and under Security Council procedures the other members had until midday Thursday to object.

Just before the deadline Russia, supported by China, put a "hold" on the complaint, which delays any action for six months, the diplomats said.

The United States had no immediate comment on the move by Russia and China, which appeared to undermine what the Americans have previously described as a strong commitment by the Security Council to enforce the North Korean sanctions.

But questions about the willingness of other countries — particularly China and Russia — to maintain the sanctions pressure on North Korea have grown since President Trump met with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, last month in Singapore.

Mr. Trump has described that meeting in glowing terms and suggested the North Korean nuclear threat has eased, even though Mr. Kim has made no concrete commitments yet to denuclearize, raising doubts about his intentions.

If the North Koreans are successfully subverting the sanctions on imported petroleum, Mr. Kim would be under less pressure to disarm.

The American complaint said North Korea might have clandestinely imported nearly 1.4 million barrels of refined petroleum this year, triple the amount allowed for

all of 2018, much of it smuggled via illicit ship-to-ship transfers at sea. The complaint requested the Security Council's sanctions panel to "order an immediate halt to all transfers of refined petroleum products" to North Korea.

The move by Russia and China to delay action on the American complaint came a day before Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was to visit the United Nations for talks on North Korea with diplomats from the Security Council, South Korea and Japan.

Mr. Pompeo has visited North Korea three times in the past few months and has insisted the sanctions will remain in force until the North denuclearizes. On Wednesday, Mr. Pompeo said that achieving a denuclearization agreement with the country "may take some time."

N.Korea Economy Declines At Sharpest Rate In 20 Yrs In 2017

By Cynthia Kim, Hayoung Choi

[Reuters](#), July 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

North Korea Has 2.6 Million 'Modern Slaves,' New Report Estimates

By Adam Taylor

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

North Korea has the highest prevalence of modern slavery in the world, with 1 out of every 10 citizens considered victims under the practice, according to estimates included in a new report.

More than 2.6 million people live under modern slavery in the country, the vast majority of them forced to work by the state, the 2018 Global Slavery Index found. The report also argued that the North Korean government had the weakest response to slavery out of all the countries surveyed, as the North Korean state itself is involved in forced labor both inside and outside the country.

The report defines modern slavery to include human trafficking, forced labor, debt bondage, forced or servile marriage, and the sale and exploitation of children, as well as slavery itself.

The findings come amid ongoing negotiations between North Korea and the United States and concurrent inter-Korean talks with South Korea. These talks have focused on denuclearization and military issues rather than human rights issues such as slavery.

"There's a strong focus on bombs and missiles, but the North Korean tragedy is much more about lost

freedom through the brutal suppression of human potential," said Andrew Forrest, founder of the Walk Free Foundation.

Under the leadership of Forrest, an Australian mining magnate turned anti-slavery campaigner, Walk Free has published the Global Slavery Index since 2013. The index aims to estimate the number of modern slaves in a country, rather than just count reported cases. The organization argues that the illicit and generally secret practice is more widespread than records show.

In the past, some experts, such as human trafficking scholar Anne Gallagher, have criticized the methodology of Walk Free's estimates, though the organization has revised its process a number of times in response to criticism. In September, it joined the U.N.-affiliated International Labor Organization (ILO) to release a report that estimated 40.3 million people were in some form of modern slavery around the world on any given day last year.

For this year's index, Walk Free teamed up with Leiden Asia Centre and the Seoul-based Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) in a bid to reach accurate estimates for North Korea, arguably the most secretive nation on earth.

Researchers conducted interviews with 50 North Korean defectors, all but one of whom said they had been subjected to conditions that met the international legal definition of "forced labor," according to the index.

"While the information vacuum poses challenges, we are confident that the data reflects the most accurate estimation on the pervasiveness of modern-day slavery inside North Korea," said Fiona David, Walk Free's executive director of global research. She noted that the research also involved looking at a variety of preexisting data from international organizations and nonprofits.

Amanda Mortwedt Oh of the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, an organization not affiliated with the research, said she was curious why the 2018 estimate was more than double a 2016 Global Slavery Index estimate. However, she did not dispute the core findings.

"North Korea is essentially a slave state that uses its own citizens for the Kim regime's benefit," Mortwedt Oh said, referring to the government led by Kim Jong Un and his father and grandfather before him.

In 2014, the U.N. Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea released a report that found that because of the scale of its human rights violations, North Korea "does not have any parallel in the contemporary world." The report highlighted North Korea's political prison camp system: Recent estimates have suggested that as many as 130,000 people were being held in four camps for alleged "political crimes."

North Korea recently announced an amnesty from Aug. 1 for people “convicted of the crimes against the country and people” to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the country. Human rights groups have cautioned that such announcements have been made in previous years and that it was not clear if a significant number of people would be released.

Forrest said that the slavery data showed the need for international pressure.

“The implementation of mass forced-labor programs, and the sheer scale of modern slavery within North Korea, is the regime’s biggest crime,” Forrest said. “Internationally, both in the U.S., Europe and beyond, we need to put this issue front and center of all discussions with Kim Jong Un, and demand immediate freedom as part of any diplomacy or cooperation with North Korea.”

The Global Slavery Index found that apart from North Korea, the countries with the worst prevalence of slavery were Eritrea, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Mauritania, South Sudan, Pakistan, Cambodia and Iran. The report noted that other countries were often complicit through the import of goods at risk of being produced through forced labor — with the United States importing the most at-risk goods of any nations, at \$144 billion a year.

Global Slavery Report Slams North Korea, Repressive Regimes

By Danica Kirka

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

LONDON — Modern slavery is most prevalent in North Korea and other repressive regimes, but developed nations also bear responsibility for it because they import \$350 billion worth of goods that are produced under suspicious circumstances, according to research released Thursday.

The Global Slavery Index estimates that 40.3 million people worldwide were subjected to modern slavery in 2016, with the highest concentration in North Korea where one in 10 people lived under such conditions. The report was compiled by the Walk Free Foundation, an anti-slavery campaign founded by Australian billionaire Andrew Forrest.

The goal of the index is to pressure governments and companies to do more to end modern slavery by providing hard data on the numbers of people involved and the impact it has around the world. For example, modern slavery in developing nations puts jobs at risk in the U.S. and Western Europe because domestic goods compete against imports produced through “exploitation of the worst kind,” Forrest told The Associated Press.

“By unraveling the trade flows and focusing on products at risk of modern slavery that are imported by the top economies, it becomes clear that even the wealthiest countries have a clear and immediate responsibility for responding to modern slavery both domestically and beyond their borders,” the report said. “Developed economies are exposed to the risk of modern slavery not only when this crime is perpetrated within their national borders, but also when that risk is effectively transferred to them via the products they import.”

Modern slavery involves the use of threats, violence and deception to take away people’s ability to control their own bodies, to refuse certain kinds of work or to stop working altogether.

The report cites coal, cocoa, cotton, timber and fish as among the products that may be tainted by modern slavery.

In North Korea, coal exports are the area of greatest concern.

The index lists Eritrea, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Mauritania, South Sudan, Pakistan, Cambodia and Iran as the worst offenders after North Korea.

Repressive regimes are of particular concern because their “populations are put to work to prop up the government,” according to the report.

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We Need A Plan B For North Korea

By Josh Rogin

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

While everyone hopes President Trump’s historic diplomacy with North Korea will succeed, it’s increasingly clear that the whole process is going poorly. In the end, leader Kim Jong Un may not be serious about denuclearizing and turning his country into a modern economy in partnership with the United States. Washington must prepare now for the possibility that diplomacy with Pyongyang could fail.

Pretending everything is going great, as Trump has done repeatedly this week, is a dangerous self-delusion. The stakes are too high to give in to the temptation to convince ourselves that a peace deal is in the offing. Of course, the best outcome would be for Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who is leading the negotiations, to succeed. But ignoring the growing possibility of the opposite result is just irresponsible.

There is already a quiet effort, both inside the Trump administration and around Washington, to develop options if the talks should fail. The aim is to

avoid war, prevent North Korea from being accepted as a nuclear state and return to a policy of maximum pressure. But for that to succeed, the United States can't wait until the talks actually break down.

"Things are going well. There's no rush," Trump said Tuesday at the White House. "We have no time limit, we have no speed limit. We are just going through the process."

Since the June 12 summit, Trump has claimed, falsely, that the North Korea nuclear threat is over, that the remains of 200 American soldiers had been returned and that North Korea would destroy another missile site after his meeting with Kim. But his newest assertion — that there's no rush — is perhaps his biggest misstep to date.

While Pompeo has refused to put a timeline on the discussions, he and other officials repeatedly have said that they don't want to repeat the mistakes of previous administrations that got dragged into protracted negotiations in which Pyongyang dangled concessions and played games. Time is on North Korea's side, not ours.

Officials have privately briefed Congress that the administration will evaluate Kim's sincerity in the spring. Between now and then, the United States' ability to maintain its sanctions regime and return to maximum pressure will suffer. Pompeo has acknowledged that China is already loosening controls on its border with North Korea.

The Trump administration is preparing minimum sanctions maintenance, which means designating new North Korea entities under existing sanctions authorities. But inside the administration, some officials want to start readying new sanctions, in anticipation of when they might be needed.

After his latest trip to Pyongyang, Pompeo claimed progress but has refused to give any details. Privately, some administration officials describe the process as a disaster, often made worse by the president's own behavior, including his offering of unilateral concessions, misrepresenting the status of key issues and speculating about removing U.S. troops from South Korea.

Talks over returning U.S. soldiers' remains have only just begun, North Korea has not issued a basic declaration of its nuclear-related assets, there's no public clarity on what Kim's pledge of denuclearization really means and there's even evidence that Pyongyang is improving its nuclear facilities.

It's not all bad news. North Korea has frozen missile and bomb tests in exchange for Trump freezing major U.S.-South Korean military drills, which is reversible. Tensions have gone down. Still, it's time for the United States to own up to the likelihood that a grand

bargain may not be possible. Kim simply might not be interested in giving up his nuclear program at all. He may not think Trump's proposal to turn North Korea into a modern economy is in his best interest.

The domestic politics of North Korean diplomacy are good for Trump, so he has a personal incentive to keep it going. Like President Richard Nixon in 1969, he can use the issue to distract from other scandals and present himself as a "peacemaker." Trump bragged about the media attention on his Kim summit and attacked the media for negative coverage; that's a win-win for him. There's no political upside to ending the process, especially not before the next election.

But the national security implications of a long, drawn-out negotiation — one in which Kim plays Trump until Trump realizes it — are severe. Nobody wants Trump to resort to a military solution, so other options must be readied. Congress should hasten work on new sanctions bills. The State Department must prepare a diplomatic strategy to pivot back to maximum pressure when the time comes, focusing on China. The Pentagon must update the military options so they remain credible, thereby lowering the prospect that they might ever be used.

Everybody wants Trump and Pompeo's North Korea diplomacy to succeed. But pretending that's likely or neglecting to anticipate the next step is foolish and risky. The United States needs to start working on a Plan B now, or be left with a binary choice between accepting a nuclear North Korea or going to war.

Iran Indicates Talks With US On Nuclear Program Unlikely

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

TEHRAN, Iran — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's chief of staff claims the president rejected eight requests from President Donald Trump last year for one-on-one talks.

It's the latest comment from Tehran suggesting Iran isn't prepared to embark on bilateral negotiations with Washington.

Trump earlier this year pulled America out of the international deal meant to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear weapon. He said last week that with increased American sanctions, "at a certain point they're going to call me and say 'let's make a deal.'"

State-owned IRAN newspaper quoted Rouhani's chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi saying Thursday that "it's been the reverse, so far," with Trump seeking to initiate talks.

He says Iran rejected the requests from the U.S. for the two presidents to meet at last year's UN General Assembly meeting.

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U.S. Delegation To Meet Turkish Officials On Iran Sanctions

[Reuters](#), July 19, 2018

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Rivers Dry And Fields Dust, Iranian Farmers Turn To Protest

By Nasser Karimi And Mohammed Nasiri

[Associated Press](#), July 19, 2018

VARZANEH, Iran (AP) — The small group of Iranian farmers gathered around their tractors — long idle, parked at the town entrance next to a canal that once irrigated their fields but has been dry for years — and they protested, pleading for help from the government.

"We are the people," shouted Mostafa Benvidi. "Help the people. At night they go to bed hungry!" They held signs addressing officials they blame for their dried-up fields. "How long will you eat your bread made with our blood?" one sign read.

Every day, farmers hold their small protest outside Varzaneh. It's a sign of the anger that has been growing over water shortages caused by a years-long drought but worsened, experts say, by government mismanagement.

Stranded paddle boats sit on the parched and emptied-out riverbed of the Zayandeh Roud River in the Iranian city of Isfahan. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

Protests have gotten larger, with bursts of violence, at a time when economic woes in the country from inflation to unemployment have fueled unrest repeatedly over the last year.

In March, Benvidi lost sight in his left eye and has more than 100 pellet shots in his body, suffered during clashes between police and farmers who held a sit-in strike in Varzaneh. Earlier this month, in another part of southern Iran, 11 people were wounded when police broke up a protest in Khorramshahr, where residents complain of brown water coming from their taps.

"Officials just come and promise to deal with the crisis and then just leave," said the 30-year-old Benvidi.

Iranians take a break under the arches of the 400-year-old Si-o-seh Pol bridge that now spans the dried-up

riverbed of the Zayandeh Roud River in the city of Isfahan. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

He and his family of six siblings and their father used to rely on their 3-hectare farm, planting barley, wheat, corn and cotton. But they haven't been able to farm for years because of lack of water. Now Benvidi is unemployed, and his family lives off the seasonal construction work his brothers get in nearby towns and a sister who weaves carpets.

Over the past decade, Iran has seen the most prolonged and severe drought in over 30 years, according to the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization. An estimated 97 percent of the country has faced some level of drought, according to the Iran Meteorological Organization.

Isfahan province, where Varzaneh is located, and neighboring provinces in central Iran have been hit particularly hard.

The Zayandeh Roud river once watered this region, flowing down from the Zagros Mountains, through the city of Isfahan and through a string of farming towns like Varzaneh and its suburbs, home to 30,000 people, some 550 kilometers (340 miles), south of the capital Tehran.

An Iranian man walks his bicycle under the 400-year-old Si-o-seh Pol bridge, named for its 33 arches, that now spans a dried-up riverbed of the Zayandeh Roud River in Isfahan. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

But it dried up years ago. The fields around Varzaneh are now stretches of desiccated, salt-laced dirt. The cattle are gone. Around 90 percent of the farming activities in the district have faded away, said Reza Khalili, an environmental activist in Varzaneh.

Government policies have worsened the strain from drought and growing population, Khalili and other experts say. Authorities have increasingly built factories, sucking up large amounts of water. In July, officials cut ribbon of another phase of a steel mill in Isfahan. Water has also been diverted to other regions.

"The water cycle has been annihilated. The entire water of river has been allocated to industry," Khalili said.

Tractors parked at the entrance to the town of Varzaneh in Iran's province of Isfahan where farmers are struggling with an unprecedented drought. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

Outside of Varzaneh once stretched the Gavkhouni wetlands, a swamp fed by Zayandeh Roud. Until a decade ago, it was a home for migrating birds, including flamingos. Now much of the 470-square kilometer (180 square mile) wetlands has shriveled into salty fields that kick up giant sandstorms blowing over the region. Khalili

warned that the dirt contains traces of mercury, lead and cadmium.

Habib Ramazani, a 57-year-old who was at the protest with Benvidi, said he and his family used to get by farming wheat, cotton and beetroot. He hasn't farmed for years now.

"I am speechless. No official pays attention to our miserable situation," said Ramazani, a father of five.

The town boasts of sending hundreds of its young men to fight in the long Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s — Ramazani was among the volunteers. A smaller town then, more than 100 of its boys were killed in the fighting, and their posters still adorn the streets.

Now young men emigrate in search of a better life.

"Many of my friends moved to near and far towns to find jobs," said Ruhollah Sohrabi, a pistachio farmer who now works as construction worker in other cities.

In 2012, farmers in Varzaneh clashed with police and broke a water pipe that transports 50 million cubic meters of water a year from Isfahan to the neighboring province of Yazd.

Similar protests continued from 2016 to now. At one point, the government paid around \$250 to each family hit by the crisis, a step criticized as a band-aid rather than a solution.

"More social conflict may be on the way. Officials do not have the necessary expertise to manage water resources," said Hamid Safavi, a professor of water resources management and environmental engineering at the Isfahan University of Technology.

He said each province decides on its own how to use their water, exploiting it for their own purposes without looking at the impact on the resources.

The Zayandeh Roud River no longer runs under the 400-year-old Si-o-seh Pol bridge, named for its 33 arches, in the Iranian city of Isfahan where farmers struggle with the aftermath of a 30-year drought. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

Unless policies change, "we are heading from a water crisis to a disaster," he said. "This is not conjecture. It is a certainty."

The Zayandeh Roud river once was the pride of Isfahan city, running under its historic bridges, most famously the Si-o-seh Pol, a 400-year-old bridge named for its 33 arches.

Now it is a barren strip of caked dirt through the city center.

Iraj Rostami stood under of the arches in the Si-o-seh Pol on a recent day, singing. He used to come here often with wife and children to admire the scenery. Now he rarely stops there. "It is gradually changing to a place for homeless and addict people," he said. "It's sad."

Farzan Shahsiah, a 49-year-old painter, looked forlornly at the dried river bed.

"I have lost my spirit. People are depressed," she said. "I hope water and beauty returns before my death."

Associated Press cameraman Saeed Sarmadi contributed to this report.

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Trump Admin Divided On Level Of Support For Iranian Protesters

By Adam Kredo

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Iranian dissidents and congressional opponents of the hardline ruling regime in Tehran are pushing Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to end a secret deal with Iran that has prevented the United States from leveling sanctions on the Islamic Republic's chief propaganda network, which has been working to quash a wave of popular protests, according to multiple sources familiar with the matter.

Ahead of a major speech this weekend in which Pompeo is expected to throw the Trump administration's support behind Iranian protesters who have taken to the streets in recent months in a bid to topple the hardline regime, Iranian dissidents and some in Congress have been demanding the State Department reverse a years-long policy that prevents the United States from sanctioning Iran's propaganda network, known as the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, or IRIB, a satellite service that disseminates propaganda across Iran and routinely censors content.

While the Trump administration has issued multiple public statements backing Iranian protesters who are fed up with the regime's financial support for terror groups, it has avoided sanctioning the IRIB, which dissidents view as a key step in helping their campaign against the ruling regime.

As protests continue to percolate and grow, the Trump administration has found itself in the position of trying to bolster these protestors while avoiding being seen as backing regime change in Iran. This policy was once advocated by current White House National Security Adviser John Bolton, who said in May this is not the Trump administration's current goal.

Under a secret deal with Iran first inked by the Obama administration, the State Department has been issuing a waiver barring U.S. sanctions on the IRIB, despite initial promises from the Trump administration to move forward with these sanctions.

U.S. action against the IRIB could send a message of support to Iranian dissidents as they continue to protest against the Islamic regime, but efforts to spur new sanctions have gone unanswered for months, prompting concerns the U.S. administration is halfheartedly supporting democratic allies struggling in Iran.

The Trump administration quietly waived IRIB sanctions in January, before Pompeo took over the State Department, a move that drew sharp criticism from congressional opponents of Iran's ruling regime, as well as dissident parties in Iran.

The State Department this week declined comment on a series of questions from the Washington Free Beacon about the IRIB sanctions and whether they will be waived again or have been waived already.

Congressional insiders have been voicing increasing concerns about the State Department's lack of clarity on the matter, according to sources familiar with the situation.

With Pompeo expected to throw U.S. support behind Iranian protesters in major policy address this weekend, dissident voices and some in Congress say it is vital to back up this talk with firm action against the IRIB, which has evaded U.S. sanctions since 2013 when the Obama administration inked a secret deal with Iran in a bid to pave the way for the landmark nuclear agreement.

Since that agreement, the United States has waived sanctions every 180 days on the IRIB, despite evidence it continues to censor content and jam broadcasts the hardline ruling regime finds unacceptable, sources said.

"Continuing this waiver would seriously undermine Secretary Pompeo's upcoming speech to the Iranian people," said Richard Goldberg, a former senior Senate official who has worked on the policy. "How do you deliver a speech saying you stand with the people of Iran while at the same time enable the propaganda lifeblood of the regime?"

"IRIB commits serious human rights abuses and should be subject to U.S. sanctions—the secretary should use his speech as the backdrop to announce just that," said Goldberg, currently a senior adviser to the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Senior congressional officials also have been met with resistance when petitioning the State Department to clarify their position on IRIB sanctions and issuing another waiver.

"The State Department's lack of communication with the Hill on IRIB is deeply troubling," one senior congressional official working on the matter told the Free Beacon. "Maybe they're going to do the right thing and issue sanctions. But it looks like they intend to keep

secretly issuing the waivers, and they don't want to tell lawmakers beforehand because the decision is both embarrassing and indefensible. That said, how do they think this ends? Do they think we won't find out they sandbagged us?"

Following initial reports by the Free Beacon in January exposing the IRIB sanctions waiver, Iranian dissident groups launched a campaign asking the Trump administration to renew sanctions on the IRIB.

In a January 7 open letter to the Trump administration, these dissident voices pleaded with the Trump administration to renew sanctions on the IRIB as part of bid to bolster opponents of the hardline regime in Tehran.

"Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting ('IRIB') has played, and continues to play, a central role in the human rights abuses perpetrated in Iran," they wrote.

"The Islamic Republic uses IRIB not only to disseminate propaganda and advance repression within Iran, but also to promote and achieve its political objectives abroad, including destabilization of the Middle East and cultivation of non-state paramilitary and terrorist organizations," the letter states.

Leading member of Congress also questioned the nature of the Obama administration's deal to waive IRIB sanctions and the Trump administration continuation of this policy.

"At such an important inflection point in Iranian history as brave Iranians are protesting an illegitimate tyranny, it defies logic that the State Department could be waiving sanctions to assist the Iranian regime," Rep. Ron DeSantis (R., Fla.), a member of the House Foreign Affairs and Oversight Committees told the Free Beacon in January, when the waivers were first disclosed.

"Congress needs to get more information about this specific waiver and why waiving such sanctions is necessary at this moment given that the protesters are calling for more sanctions against the regime," DeSantis said at the time.

Saeed Ghasseminejad, an Iran research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies who has been in contact with Iranian dissident voices, told the Free Beacon that IRIB sanctions are key, though the issue has received little attention in the media.

"What IRIB does is harmful to the United States and its national interests around the world," Ghasseminejad said. "IRIB has been promoting violence against the United States for a long time; it closely works with the IRGC [Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps] and its intelligence organization, and it has been involved in systematic violation of human rights."

If the United States is to be seen as a force for change in Iran—as Pompeo is expected to discuss in his

speech on Sunday—the Trump administration must take action against Iran’s powerful propaganda networks, he said.

“It is a short-sighted decision to waive the U.S. sanctions against the IRIBs especially when it seems the main reason to issue the waiver is to help a company, whose main headquarters is in Luxemburg, to make money by selling its service to the propaganda arm of Islamic Republic’s terror machine,” Ghasseminejad said.